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Section 2912

LECTURES
TO
LORDS SPIRITUAL;
OR AN
ADVICE TO THE BISHOPS.



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LECTURES
TO
LORDS SPIRITUAL:
OR, AN
ADVICE TO THE BISHOPS,
CONCERNING
RELIGIOUS ARTICLES,
TITHES, AND CHURCH POWER.
WITH A
DISCOURSE ON RIDICULE.

By the Reverend Mr. J. A. MURRAY,
Author of SERMONS to ASSES, &c.

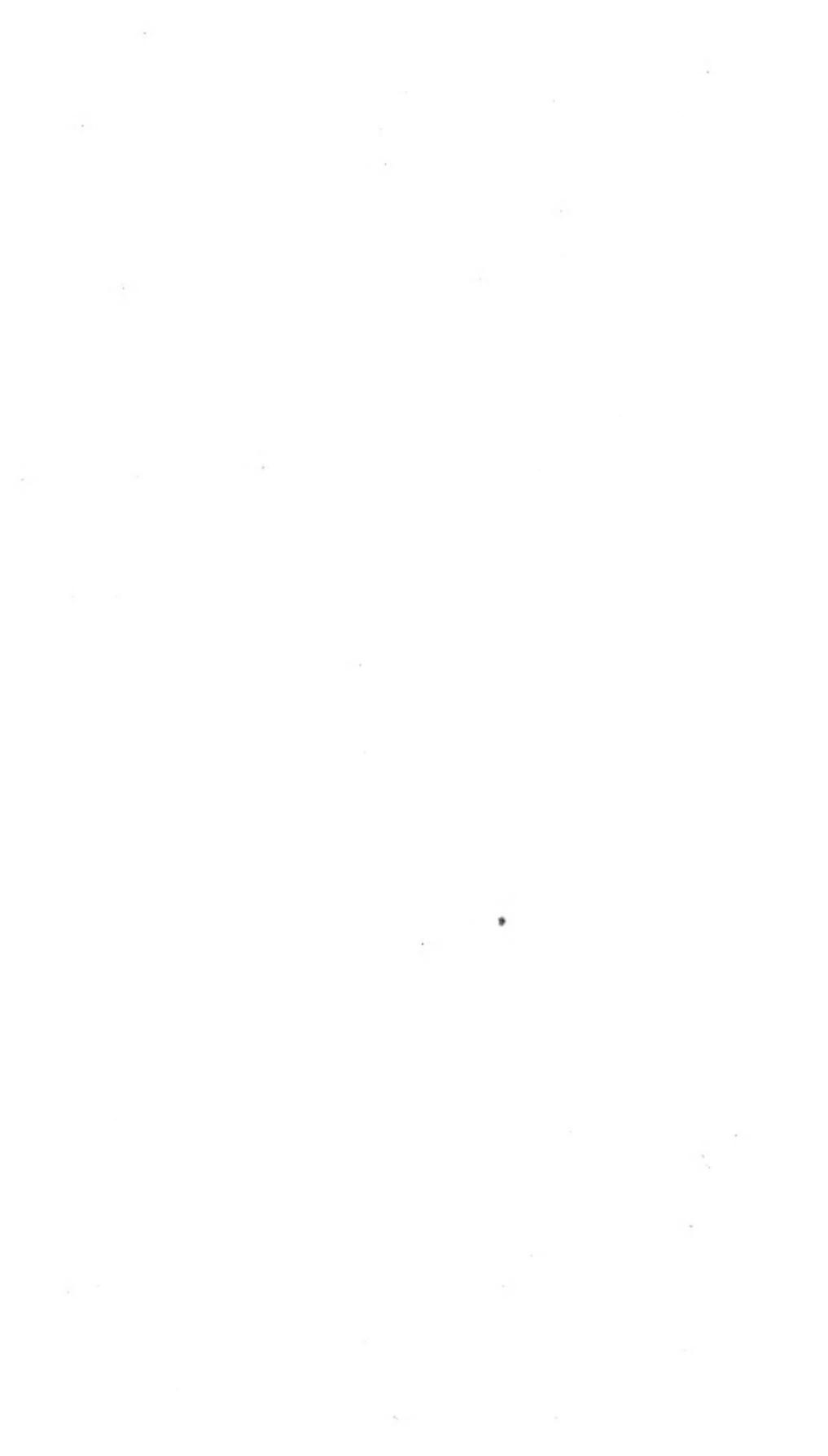
I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.
Rev. ii. 16.

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MDCCLXXIV.



A D

DOMINOS SPIRITUALES.

DOCTISSIMI PRESTANTISSIMI VIRI,

CUM vestram dignitatem in Ecclesia Anglicana, Veri Spiritui oppositam magis magisque cogitemus, nostri animi mirando, stupefacti sunt ; quo pacto, Illustrissimi Viri, a Sacris Literis erravissent. Vox Sacra videntibus a prejudiciis liberatis est tam manifesta, ut nulli nisi capti oculis, sed eam intelligere possent. Si quidem vis lucri vestros animos inquinati obruit poscendum veniam Deum, de hoc horrifico malo.

CICERO Domini declaravit, quæ vestris præcordiis sunt digna : “ Nemo enim justus “ esse potest, qui mortem, qui dolorem, qui “ exilium, qui egestatem, timet ; aut quæ his “ sunt contraria equitati anteponit. Maxime- “ que admirantur eum, qui pecunia non mo- “ vetur : quod in quo viro perspectum sit hunc “ dignum spectatu arbitrantur.”

Decet omnes Episcopos CICERONIS sententias animis considerare. Melius esset, si mente alta DEI leges in dies revolvissent.

P R E F A C E.

IT is a commandment of our Saviour, to preach the Gospel to every *Creature*: I am afraid that I have transgressed this rule. Our Saviour undoubtedly meant God's *Creatures*; but whether my Audience, in their exalted station, are *such*, is somewhat problematical. But though God did not make them Bishops, or Lords Spiritual, he has made them *men*; in this sense they are his *Creatures*. Perhaps a few Sermons may do them good; they are welcome to the following, whatever may happen. There is a period to come, when we shall all be upon a level, which *men of rank*, as well as others, would do well to remember. Their *Graces* and *Lordships* cannot be the worse of being put in mind of their latter end. It is but *seldom* their Chaplains make so free with them. I heartily wish they may all arrive safely in the kingdom of Heaven, though their Mitres in this world should be laid in *the dust*. I expect no reward for the small service I have done them;

them ; they may read these Discourses or not, as they please. They have read better, and perhaps worse ; but such as they are, they are welcome to peruse them. If they will be so kind as to set us free from the Articles of the Church, and the Penal Laws connected therewith, I shall promise never to preach to them any more.



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S E R M O N

S E R M O N I.

MATTHEW, Ch. xxiii. ver. 4,

For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

TO help your Reverences to understand this passage I must refer you to Isaiah 10, i.—They are unrighteous decrees, made by men in power, to enslave those who are under their Jurisdiction:—Of this sort I conceive the present Articles of your Church to be. All the Decrees con-

A cerning

cerning the imposing your Articles are unrighteous.—Your Lordships had no power to make them at first, and the continuance of them is a constant usurpation of the prerogative of Christ.— As I intend to preach a short word to you, who seldom preach any yourselves, though you are sufficiently paid for that purpose, I shall endeavour to shew that all Laws concerning your Articles are unrighteous, and *burdens grievous to be borne*; and, for the sake of form, shall make some practical improvement.

As to the first, all Laws concerning your Articles are contrary to the Great charter of liberty in the gospel, wherewith Christ hath made his Disciples free. I have seen it asserted, by some of the best English Lawyers, That even a British Parliament, with the King at their head, have no lawful power to make any Laws contrary to the Great Charter of the Kingdom; for, in such a case, the constitution

tition would be dissolved, and a revolution would insue. Whatever may be in this, it is manifest, from the New Testament, that all decrees which are contrary to the Gospel Charter of Christian Liberty, destroy the Constitution of the Church. Allow me to ask your Lordships, In what part of the Gospel, or the writings of our Saviour's Apostles, you find authority for any order of men making rules of Faith for others, and imposing them upon them on pain of loss and displeasure. You ought certainly to give us some satisfaction in a matter of so much consequence. It is altogether unrighteous to claim a privilege in Religion which you can produce no warrant for from the Book where all religious privileges are contained. You cannot even shew the smallest hint in all that Jesus and his Apostles have said, that has any reference to such an order of Clergymen as you profess to be. Pray, do good Sirs! shew a Lord Spiritual in

the New Testament; Shew a Most, or a Right Reverend Father in God, in all that Book, and you shall have all due honours paid you. You stare at the demand.—But it is not reasonable before you receive honours, or assume power, that you produce your warrant for so doing? But suppose we should indulge you with your titles, and suffer you to receive praise one of another. Yet we can see no reason why you should retail out our Faith to us, and settle the bounds of our Creed. Is it not unrighteous for Clergymen to assume powers which our Saviour hath forbidden, and his Apostles expressly refused? Pray, my dear Doctors, hear what your Redeemer says, *Neither be ye called Masters, for one is your Master, even Christ.* His apostles says the same thing in effect, *We are not Lords of your Faith, but helpers of your joy.* What Jesus has forbidden, and his apostles refused, how dare you pretend to assume? To Christians there is but one Lord,

Lord, and one Faith, but in your Church there are twenty-six Lords, and two Faiths.—The doctrine contained in divine revelation, and another very different, contained in your Articles. I hope you will not be so daring as to presume to affirm that the Doctrine in the Bible, and that contained in the thirty-nine Articles, are the same. Remember there is no Resurrection of the Dead in all your Articles. The want of this doctrine makes an essential difference, you will perhaps say in your defence, you only impose the Articles upon Teachers, who are to have the care of Souls.—Be so kind as shew your warrant for this. If it is not in the Gospels, or in some of the Epistles, you must own you have none. But this practice is founded upon the right all Societies have over their members. Stop a little.—The Church is a Society, which has all things established by the authority of her Lord and Master; her Faith is given compleatly in the Scriptures,

and every office and duty is fully and perfectly revealed there. A Church is a Society formed according to the mind of Christ, and not according to the will of men: All contingencies are provided for by him, who knew all his works from the beginning, and perfectly foresaw what would happen. There can never be any need of Bylaws to answer purposes which could not be forseen.—Your Saviour, My Lords, knew all things that ever could happen, and has provided for them in his word. He even foresaw that men, like you, would seek to be Lords over his heritage; and has made a Law against it. You may try your Experiments in the Kingdoms of this World, if you please, but beware of making alterations in our Saviour's Kingdom, on pretence that it is the right of Societies to make rules for their members.—Christ has given you the Scriptures; be satisfied with them. They will

will answer all purposes to make the man of God perfect ; they served Timothy, and may well serve the Clergy of England. Timothy, you say, was a Bishop too ;—well then imitate him, and give up all Articles, except the word of God. All your decrees and canons concerning Religion are unrighteous, mere will-worship and doctrines of men.—Can you not trust men with the care of Souls, who promise to teach according to the Old and New Testament, as well as he who promises to teach according to the Articles.—You swear upon the Gospels, which implies, that you think they have some efficacy to inforce truth, why may they not serve Ministers to subscribe, and be a sufficient test of Orthodoxy ? But you will say, perhaps, that all parties pretend to hold by the Scriptures, even when they teach the grossest Errors. And truely, an't please your Lordships, the Articles are but a poor safe-guard a-

gainst Heresy. Some of yourselves have hinted, that they may be taken in different senses ; who, then, is sure which is the true sense? It is true, men need not subscribe unless they please, they have no more to do but let them alone, and want a living,—and they had better do this than subscribe the Doctrine they do not believe : But is it righteous in you the leaders in the Church, to impose such hardships on worthy honest men ; who are willing to teach Christianity according to the best of their Judgement, as it is made known in Divine Revelation. But do you yourselves believe the Articles? Pray do not stare again. I have really *just* ground of suspicion concerning you. Your Sermons, my Lords—Your printed Sermons, bear witness against you ; few, if any of them, are consistent with those aphorisms, which you are so tenacious in supporting. If these articles are so proper to support the orthodox faith, why do you not preach agreeable

agreeable to the Doctrine contained in them? This does not look well on your part. Is it not altogether unrighteous to impose doctrines upon your Brethren, which you never mean to teach yourselves? Perhaps, you do not mean that they should teach them, you only require subscription. Is not this prevarication, and lying to God? Was this the way the Holy Ghost moved you, when you entered into orders? Alas! my Lords, I pity you! You ought to give up these badges of unrighteousness, and cease to faddle the Clergy, like so many Asses, with such ungodly trapping. You ride in state now, and receive honours of men, but mind the Great Bishop and Shepherd of Souls is to come again, and you must give an account of your conduct. Your Mitres will be laid in the dust, and the long Robes you love to walk in will be insufficient to cover your nakedness at the day of Judgement.

The

The imposition of Articles is unrighteous, if your Reverences will please to consider, that they have an immediate tendency to hinder all religious enquiries, and argue the imperfection of the word of God as a standard, to direct Christian teachers in matters of religion. Is it not plain when such a system is made a standard of Christian Doctrine, that the word of God was insufficient without such a manufacture, to lead men into truth? — And supposing your Articles are the very true sum and scope of Scripture knowledge; is not the didactic part of your office useless? — For what occasion is there for any more teaching from Scripture, when you have reached the scope and meaning of divine Revelation? All that you have now to do is to illustrate your own articles. This, my Lords, is a poor compliment paid to the Bible. But is it not a sign that the meaning of your Articles is not quite clear, when it needs such long and tedious illustrations?

lustrations? Bishop Burnet certainly believed that your Articles were not altogether plain, when he was at so much pains as to write large Commentaries upon them. Though your articles were altogether agreeable to the word of God, yet you have no right to impose them as articles of other men's Faith: for you are not their Judges, none have a right to impose matters of belief upon us, but he who has a right to Judge us for our unbelief, and can reward us for our faith. The Stewards in the Church should bring forth, out of their treasure, things new and old: but your imposition prevents all new discoveries in religion. If the Articles are the true meaning of Scripture, as they ought to be before they can be reasonably imposed as tests of Faith, they are the rules by which teachers must instruct their hearers, and every new discovery is excluded unless it tallies exactly with the old; in this respect it cannot be new. But can any thing

thing be more unrighteous and absurd, than to impose a formulary of faith upon others which must itself be tried by the Scriptures, before it can fully be received? If the first rule is sufficient, there is no occasion for the latter, and if the latter is the supreme judge of all controversies, there is no need of the first. This, Gentleman, is very unnecessary trouble; for those who are qualified to discover the sense of scripture from itself, have no occasion for any other Articles. If teachers are honest men, they have no need of any test of faith except the Scriptures, and if they are not, all the Articles in the world will not make them so.—When a system of religion is imposed upon men as a standard, by which they are to teach others, it ought to be so plain as to be self-evident, and so compleat as to need no amendment. If it is doubtful, it will be difficult to pursue its intention; if it is imperfect, it will need a supplement, and this supposes that

that it might be wanted; for wherever we can find this supplement, we may find the whole without being obliged to any other men's Labours.

I am aware that your Lordships will be ready to say, that the Scriptures are not all self-evident, and that what I have now said is an argument against their perfection, as well as against the Articles. But, stop a little Gentlemen; the greatest part of the word of God is self-evident, and where it does not appear so very plain, there is a promise made by the Author thereof, that the Holy Ghost shall make it known. For your edification, I shall set before you a few passages of divine truth, which may help your Reverences to understand this subject a little better.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not. But when the Comforter

forter is come, even the Spirit of Truth, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness *. Howbeit, when the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall bear that shall he speak, and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you †. But when the Comforter shall come, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. For the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God. Behold, I will make known my words unto you.—Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you.—If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you ‡. You cannot produce such promises in behalf of any human Articles. What the dif-

* John xv. 26, 27. † John xvi. 13, 14.

‡ John xv. 7.

ciples of Christ know not in the mean-time, he has promised to shew them afterwards ; but human devices have no such promise made to them. Is there not a wide difference between propositions which are both dark and doubtful, and such as are only obscure, but certain in themselves, and have the promise of an infinite Author annexed to them, that we shall understand them as we have occasion for more knowledge ? Though the Almighty has spoken some things in such a manner as to confound the wise, yet we are sure the author cannot deceive us. But can as much be said for legions of fallible Clergymen, who have both their own passions, their prejudices and private interests to gratify ! Truly, my Lords, ten or twelve thousand pounds a year will always have a powerful effect on the tempers of Divines. The Doctrines of the Old Testament which were not understood by high Priests, like you, were yet revealed to Babes, in the channel

nel in which truth will always be made manifest. It is a sad truth, and bears a dreadful aspect to men of your character,—that not many mighty, not many wise men, according to the flesh, are called. The rich man in the Parable had all his good things in this life, but in the next he lift up his eyes in hell.—Pardon the expression ; those are the words of our Lord, and you ought to know them. By imposing articles, you assume the prerogative of the King of Zion, the crime is high treason against him, were you to do so in England, without the consent of your Sovereign, you would come under a premunire. The King of Zion will likewise vindicate his own authority ; he will maintain his prerogative to your shame, if you continue to pursue the paths you have hitherto walked in. Some of your brethren have shewed their inclinations to be delivered from their yokes of bondage, but you want to wreath the yoke faster about their necks.

necks. It is unrighteous—it is unreasonable—Your Saviour forbids it—and will you contradict him?—He comes—He comes the second time, without Sin unto Salvation.—Every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him.—My Lords, you must be there;—you look agast! but it is true; the small and the great must attend his coming. Will a Presentation, or a *Conge d'Elire* be of any service to vindicate your usurpation of his prerogative? Will a dispensation from the Crown to hold livings without doing duty avail you before the Judge of all the earth? Your works will be tried by fire.—Gold and Silver and precious Stones, Mitres, and Crowns, will all be calcined to ashes. Every man's works shall be tried by fire of what sort it is. Conscience, Gentlemen, allow Conscience to speak, and I shall have the whole bench of Bishops on my side.—You smile! and to be sure, Mitres and Crowns, Honours and Power,

with so many thousands of yearly income, will make any worldly man smile; —but the joys of the wicked are but short. There is a period to come, when these shall afford but small pleasure.

It is unrighteous to impose human *dogmas* upon others, because it is laying a stumbling-block before them.— You, my Lords, know how strong the temptation which arises from the prospect of a good living is. Many unguarded Mortals have swallowed down Articles they have never digested, for a few hundreds a-year.—But why should snares be laid for men's virtue, when there is no occasion for it? What advantage arises either to the Church or State from imposing human Articles? Have the aphorisms of the Clergy more efficacy to make men good Churchmen, and true Subjects, than divine Revelation? Perhaps you are afraid that if the Articles were laid aside, the Dissenters would

would come into your Churches, and devour your livings. You have more to do than to remove the Articles before that happen.—Your Liturgy, my Lords, your ill-said Mass in English, must be removed also, before you receive any danger from that quarter.—It would do you honour to lay aside both ; but ease your own members first, and let the Dissenters enjoy their Toleration ; you have even a pleasure in holding the scourge of your Articles over their heads. It is an unrighteous decree by which you hold that authority ; it was owing to men of your order that ever there was such a law hanging over their heads. It is poor spite to envy men their Liberty, when they are asking none of your Emoluments. Though they pay your Tithes, you are not satisfied unless you have dominion over their Consciences. This is an old evil among Lords Spiritual. Your predecessors led the way, and you are disposed to follow them. Suppose

it were your own case, my Lords, would you think it reasonable for others to lay restrictions upon your Consciences, who have no right to do so? Suppose there should another long parliament start up, and disolve the Hierarchy, and require you to use the Scotch Directory, and avouch all the Articles of Presbytery, on pain of certain fines and imprisonments, would you account it just? Or suppose they should excuse you three and an half, would you not say, and very justly, they ought not to be Lords of your Faith? The application is easy, and your Reverences must undoubtedly perceive it. You account yourselves a part of the British Constitution, and imagine that all will go to ruin if your Ecclesiastical power is called in question.—But it is by right of your Baronies that you sit in Parliament, and not as Church Officers. I appeal to Judge Blackstone if this is not true. There have Laws been made without the presence of Bishops, which

which are still in force, that shew that Lords Spiritual are no essential part of the English constitution. In the reigns of Edward I. Richard II. and Henry III. parliaments were held without Bishops, and it was resolved by all the Judges in England, that the King may hold his Parliament with his Lords and Commons without them. The Constitution would be quite safe, although there were not a Bishop in England, or any where else.

The unreasonableness of requiring subscription to Articles will further appear, if we consider that they do not answer the end they are said to be intended for. They are intended to preserve Orthodoxy in the Faith; but either the Articles are not found, or many of the dignified Clergy are not. It will puzzle all the Divines in the universe to reconcile the writings of Tillotson, Sherlock, and Clarke, with the Thirty-nine Articles

cles of the Church of England. Even the late Archbishop Secker is not able to abide this standard. I could give many instances ; but those who read both will easily perceive the difference. I might even appeal to his Grace of Gloucester, whether his treatise on the Spirit is exactly consistent with the Articles he some time ago subscribed. What is the meaning of so much zeal for subscription, when it answers no good purpose ? Your Lordships would take it ill if I should compare you to prostitutes, who, when they have lost their own reputations, are always fond to seduce others into the paths of vice. It is altogether unrighteous to hold by Laws which expressly contradict the Laws of Jesus Christ. Christ commands us to call no man Master but himself, in what pertains to the Conscience ;—but the Laws of the Clergy say the very contrary, and oblige men under grievous pains and losses to subscribe Articles they themselves

selves do not believe. Is it not a burden grievous to be borne, for men either to subscribe what they have no evidence to believe, or be deprived of emoluments which they have as good a right to as others of his Majesty's subjects? Subscription does not give a right to a living, it is the presentation which gives that. Now to urge unnecessary qualifications, is the same thing as depriving a man of his right. You, my Lords, know that the qualification is of no real use, and yet you insist upon it; is not this binding heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and laying them on men's shoulders? You will not touch them with one of your fingers. You will neither undertake to answer for subscribers, provided they shall incur guilt by subscribing, nor provide a living for them in case they should be destitute. It is in your power to relieve them, if you are willing. You can join in an application to parliament for their relief, or you cannot oppose it when

when it is made. I do not mean it can be of any real use to a Christian Church if you did ; but it would be lessening the burdens of your brethren.—But this, perhaps, is too much to be expected from High Priests : it is more than your brethren the Pharisees would grant to our Saviour, or his Apostles, and I am afraid we must not expect it from you. The Civil Powers would have relieved Jesus Christ, but the Priests remonstrated against it.—So Jesus is crucified at the request of the Clergy. Jesus did not ask any favours at their hands ; but if he had, they did not seem disposed to grant him any. He was a non-conformist, and did not approve of their Articles, and so could not be forgiven by Priests. Though you have not the same object, your principle is the same ; they were afraid of the constitution of their Church, and the emoluments they enjoyed, and are not your reasons the same ? My Lords

Lords, you cannot deny it ; it is too evident to be decently denied.

The Jewish Clergy imposed heavy Burdens on the people ; they had the Tithes of almost all things, the very mint and cummin could not escape them.—You have the same, the Fruits of our Fields, the increase of our Cattle, the plants and roots of our Gardens, are tythed by you, Ah ! you are like your brethren the Pharisees ! only you do not fast nor pray so often, otherwise you are much belied.—And you use your brethren as the Pharisees did Christ, you scandalize them, because they do not love your yoke of bondage. Christ was accounted an Heretic, because he set up a more simple religion than that of the Jews, and some of you serve your brethren in the same way. You impute designs to them which you cannot prove, and which very probably were never in their hearts.—This is unfair, ungenerous,

nerous and unchristian. But why should I expect Christianity in a Jewish dispensation? The poor animals are truly to be pitied who must couch down under your Burdens; they may long wait before you stretch forth the hand to help them. The petitioners are like the man who fell among the thieves, they will find no mercy at the hands of Priests and Levites.

Some of the friends of clerical usurpation have of late received the old Popish argument concerning the power of the Church to appoint Articles for the men to believe, and allege that the Church, by which they mean the Clergy, is the only judge of all matters of Faith.—But the question to be first resolved is, Who is the Church? Have the common people no concern in this question? If so, they are no way answerable for any errors they may be led into under the direction of the Clergy. The framers

framers of Creeds and Articles must answer for all. It is amazing to observe the assurance of those devotees of Popery; they claim a privilege which none but the Head of the Church can claim; or such as can shew infallible and indisputable signatures that he has intrusted them with that power. Sarpedon tells us, that to suffer men to interpret the Scriptures according to their own private judgment is to suffer them to follow their own fancies; and where is the harm of this, provided their fancy is right and consistent with the dictates of reason? One man's fancy may pass as well as that of another; and there have been more foolish fancies generated in the brains of the Clergy assembled in Synods, and Councils, than ever have appeared among any equal number of men of any denomination. But the Clergy settled the number of Canonical Books, and they have a right we are told also to settle their signification. Softly, Gentlemen,

lemen, this will not be granted you; you reckon too fast. Are you sure that revelation would not have been received unless the Clergy had taken the trouble to settle that point? But though they took this upon them, the question is, who gave them authority? Might not any number of honest men have done the same thing. All that they had any right to do was to give their advice concerning that point; if their advice was received, it was the power of Providence, and not their authority which settled the number of Canonical Books. They endeavoured to obtain the sanction of the civil authority to enforce their decisions, and by that means obliged the subjects of the Empire to receive the Scriptures; but they did the same thing with their Canons and Creeds, which will prove that they also are Canonical.

The Clergy assembled in Councils only told what they thought, but it only belonged

belonged to the power of the Almighty to make men believe that they were right. And this conviction could only proceed from the evidence of Scripture doctrine, when they had examined it. If they received it upon the authority of the Clergy it was implicit faith, and not a rational conviction of Truth ; to those who received it in this fashion, it was not the word of God, but the word of man. The Clergy are always ready to put us in mind how much we are obliged to them ; but if accounts were fairly settled, I am afraid that the Balance will appear to be much on the other side. They are ready on all occasions to take more trouble to themselves than there is any reason to thank them for ; and besides they are always well paid for their trouble. When these Gentlemen shew as much concern for men's eternal happiness, as they appear anxious for the Mammon of unrighteousness, it will remove some suspicions concerning their

springs of action : But as long as they appear more anxious for the tithes of anise, mint, and cummin, than mercy judgement and faith ; very few honest men will pay them any regard. When the Gentlemen of your order took the trouble to collect the Canonical Books of Scripture, did not the Civil Powers pay them for their pains? Councils seldom assembled but at a great expence to the Public, and Bishops were never such fools as to travel at their own expence, unless when they could not help it. I would desire your friend Sarpedon to tell us no more of the succession of a Church, with power to establish Articles, unless he takes in the whole Community of believers into the Idea ; and even all they have a right to do, is to make the best they can of the Articles which Christ and his Apostles have already formed to their hands. If it were necessary to pursue Sarpedon very close, he might be required to prove from the nature

nature of Christ's Kingdom, and the account which Revelation gives of a Church, that any number of Clergymen can be a Church, he will not find such an idea in the whole New Testament. The Apostles themselves did not assume that title when they were assembled, but considered themselves as only members of the Church where they were. Suppose that all the Cardinals and Bishops of the Church of Rome were assembled with the Pope at their head, they could not with any propriety be called the Church of Rome; they could only be an *Ecclesia* of Clergy; a Christian Church has a far more extensive idea. The two Houses of Convocation of England are not the Church of the England, nor even the representatives of that Church, they only represent some of the Clergy. I am not sure if the poor Curates have any representation; but I am sure that the people have none in either of these houses. It argues great officiousness;

my Lords, in you, and your brethren, to pretend to do men's busines without their consent; and great ambition to pretend to be their Masters, without any just right or authority. It is a burden grievous to be borne, for men to be obliged to commit their Spiritual concerns to persons they cannot trust nor confide in;—who instead of seeking to save their souls, prey upon their substance, and riot in their possessions.

One grievous burden you lay upon our shoulders is yourselves; the majority of the nation reckon you a heavy burden, and long to be freed from you.—Your extravagant incomes might do much good; your Lordships devour more in a year than all the Clergy of Scotland.—And yet the people there are as nice and intelligent, and know more of religion, than the greatest part of the people in any of your Dioceſes; even the poor Difſenters within your own bounds

bounds will compare with any of your people, who are immediately under your very noses. Is it not, most Reverend and right Reverend Fathers in —, a burden grievous to be borne, to see a man, who never preaches above once a year, devour twelve or fifteen thousand pounds *per annum*, and one who drudges from day to day, not have as much as keep his family from rags, nor himself from beggary? — You say that it is the Constitution; — may Heaven soon dissolve it; for God never made it. — You know this, Gentlemen, as well as I; your Consciences have told it you a thousand times, but Honour, Power, and Luxury, have rendered you callous to all conviction.

It is a burden grievous to be borne, and which you never touch with one of your fingers, though you lay it on, I mean your Spiritual Courts. In these you reign like lions in their dens, and tear

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to pieces all who have the misfortune to fall under your power. Your Courts resemble the fabled Castles of the Giants, where nothing is to be seen but the spoils of victims devoured by your merciless hands. Woe to the man who enters within your Spiritual dominions ; for though his soul can never be the better by any thing you can do, his body, his interest and substance, shall be considerably worse. Ye Culprits, who have ever been within the walls of these inquisitions, say, What help, what aid, did you receive from the fingers of the Bishops ? was not his little finger heavier than the loins of your Saviour, who is all mercy and goodness ? What do you think of his Chancellor, Proctors, and Apparitors ? Saw you any mercy in their visage, or clemency in their looks ? Nay, nay ; every one would look for his gain from his quarter, as long as you had a farthing. His Lordship's finger would not ease

ease your burden, nor mitigate your fine, however grievous to be borne.

The Articles, Liturgy, and Athana-
fian Creed, are heavy burdens, and grie-
vous to be endured, which you zealously
bind on other men's shoulders, though
you give them nothing for bearing
them. You do not add twenty pounds a
year to the living of a poor Curate for
subscribing and reading these badges of
superstition. If a man is so obliging as
to sell you his Conscience, you ought
undoubtedly to keep his teeth going.
Many of your underlings would never
read nor subscribe a single Article of
those fopperies, were it not for a little
temporary enjoyment; and far too small,
my Lords, for so much obedience. If
they would cleave to the Lord Jesu
Christ, he would reward them better
for their service. You ought to consider
them; many of them are dutiful crea-
tures, and obey your mandates with great

punctuality: But it is hard to perform such disagreeable business for such puny rewards.—A little help would be of some service;—a hundred instead of forty pounds a year would make the Athanasian Creed go better down. You can easily afford it out of so many thousands. I wonder much, considering the temper of the times, that there are any Creeds read at all; for it is seldom that some Churches have any Sermons.

The Damnation of your Creed is grievous to be borne—who can rehearse it without saying, *Miserere, Domine*. I wonder you are not ashamed to deal so often in unreasonable Damnation.—Shall all men be damned who do not believe the Athanasian Creed? then all the Apostles are in a miserable situation. Your Lordships, I am afraid, will stand a poor chance. Ask your Consciences if you believe it. *Horresco referens, est horribile dictu.* If all

all who do not believe this unscriptural Creed shall perish eternally, who then can be saved? for never a son of Adam was able to believe it. Jesus Christ himself could not believe it; for it is not true, and he could not believe a falsehood. It is a burden, my Lords—it is a grievous burden, and it is unreasonable for you to bind it upon any persons. I would not wish the Devil to have such a burden, I wish it had only been nonsense; for then we might have laughed at it; but it is fit to spoil any man's mirth to hear the Clergy curse so heartily, and all the people say *Amen.* Bleſs and curse not, is the true maxim;—it is a glorious maxim,—a God-like maxim. The other is devilish-like, wicked, and abominable. Pray remove this burden altogether; touching it with your finger will not do; it will burn you, it will set all your lawn sleeves in a flame, if you come near it.—*Noli me*

tangere is its motto.—Read, and take warning before it is too late, lest what came upon the Jewish Priests come upon you, which God of his infinite mercy prevent. *Amen.*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N II.

MATTHEW, Ch. xxiii. ver. 4.

For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders ; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

ONE of their fingers would be insufficient to move them ; the whole strength of their bodies would not be able to move the burdens they have laid upon others. I heartily wish, and so will every honest man, that the race of the Pharisees had never survived the destruction of Jerusalem, but had been consumed in the Temple, when

the Roman soldiers set it on fire. The world had been well cleared of a race of Vermin, which since have not only devoured widows' houses, but have preyed on every house and cottage in the world, wherever they have had power. They have infested the world almost in all quarters, and have changed themselves into every shape. They have assumed the shape of Bishops, Patriarchs, Metropolitans, Cardinals, and Popes, and will turn any thing to serve their own ends, and purposes.—The Almighty seems to have sent them as a scourge to punish all nations who have not valued those liberties and privileges which he hath bestowed upon them.

The persons spoken of here were an amphibious kind of creatures, partly Laymen and partly Clergymen; they were something like what you would call a Rector or Vicar made Justice of the

the Peace, or a Bishop made a Baron ;— they belonged to both states, that they might devour the profits of both. They had a sort of double authority ; as Priests, they could shut men out of the Kingdom of Heaven, and as Lawyers and Civil Officers, they could banish them from this World. It was dangerous to disoblige them ; for if any one happened to offend them, and fell under their curses, they had no privilege in things civil. They were like men excommunicated in the Bishops' Courts, who cannot sue for their civil Rights till their Lordships loose their sentence. They had the whole *Credenda* of the nation under their controul, and no man durst pretend to believe a single sentence without their good Licence. They had the sole power of all the Synagogues in the kingdom ; and could likewise licence Gin-shops. They were a strange sort of beings——they were exceedingly like to English Bishops.

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In the first place, because they were the creatures of the King, or the civil power. In the days of our Saviour, the Romans made any one High Priest whom they pleased. The Tetrarch had a power to do it; and Josephus tells us, that Herod transferred the Priesthood from Jonathan to his brother Theophilus; and Agrippa took away the Priesthood from Jesus the son of Gamaliel, and gave it to Matthias the son of Theophilus. This shews that the High Priests among the Jews were not now a divine institution, but creatures of human policy. While they continued upon the plan of their original institution, none of the Kings of Judah could remove them; but after they turned Pharisees, they became mere creatures of the state.—This, an't please your Reverences, shews, that when the Clergy join with the kingdoms of this world, the Lord Jesus Christ will have no more to do with them.

them. I have seen in some of the printed sermons of the Bishops and Clergy some hard sayings against the Scribes and Pharisees :—but these preachers did not consider that they were abusing their betters, and their Fathers too. There never were in the world, believe me, my dear Doctors, a set of men more zealous for Church Authority,—for tithes,—for the rights of the Clergy,—for keeping the common people in subjection,—for persecuting Dissenters,—for an established Church, and the Lord knows what.——They were zealous, like you, for human Articles also.——

I observed that the ancient Jewish Priests, the Pharisees, were creatures ; and what could they be else ? But the Lord never made them ;—they were exactly like our English Bishops, creatures of civil authority. No man need to wonder that they were dutiful to the powers of this earth ;—for it is some way

way natural for creatures to worship their Creator. This very morning all the birds in this wild aviary are expressing the feelings of gratitude to him that made them.—I do not mean, my Lords, that they do it so politely as Lords Spiritual, nor use so much ceremony as a Bishop does, when he is admitted into the Royal Presence, to shew his gratitude for his preferment;—but they do it in a way which is far better;—they do it from the heart. The rooks on the old trees before my window,—the black-bird in the garden-hedge,—the thrush and linnet on the spray, with all the rural concert of feathered songsters, would do one's heart good to hear how gladsome they are to praise their Creator for the pleasing enlivening beams of the morning sun.—The ewes and lambkins on the banks of the rivulet,—the cattle on yonder meadow,—all seem pleased, and, according to their different manners, praise the Lord that made

made them. No signs of ambition (except to please) appear among them. The fox, who just now issued forth from among the brakes and whins, and devoured the tender lamb, and put the flocks in fear, suggested to my mind the idea of a Bishop,—a Priest,—a Pharisee!—How flyly did he make his approach! as if upon some friendly visit, till he was within reach of his unhappy victim? which he devoured, without mercy, as the Pharisees did widows' houses,—or as Commissaries or Proctors devour the substance of poor culprits in the spiritual courts.—This was paying devotion to the belly, like those who make it their god, and who mind earthly things. It is a disgraceful thing to live on the vitals of others, like foxes, wolves, and kites.—It is their nature, to be sure, to live on the ruins of other creatures; but it is not the nature of man, God made man upright.—All similitude between man and ravenous animals

animals is a perversion of their nature.

When I observe that there is an exact agreement between Bishops and the ancient Jewish Priests, I would not be understood as if I meant those under the Theocracy, while the Lord was among that people; there does not appear to be the least resemblance between those offices of God's appointment and our Clergy. Those sons of Levi were called and appointed by God himself, and were Priests by a divine Ordinance: Both they and the Kings of Israel were appointed by the authority of Heaven, and made each a part of the Theocracy. When they continued in this channel, and fulfilled the laws of the Theocracy, the Lord acknowledged them, and shewed them favour; but after they obstinately transgressed the laws which God, as their King, had given them, and walked according to their

own vain imaginations, he forsook them, and no more acknowledged them for his people ; yet they did not give up their claims, when God gave them up, but endeavoured to support their claim to God as their God, and to the distinguishing privileges which, as a nation, they had formerly enjoyed. But, alas ! they had lost their right, which rendered their claim absurd and ridiculous. When the Messiah, who was the end of their law, was come, it was wicked and impious to support their Hierarchy. All dominion in matters of conscience now centered in Jesus ; the dominion of the Priesthood, as well as the Royal authority, rested on him. He alone claimed the privilege to forgive sins, and the sole right of legislation, as the King whom God had set upon his holy hill of Zion. The pretensions of the Jewish Priests to authority and dominion was therefore very profane. Your present Hierarchy, my Lords, is established upon the very fame

same principle which influenced the Jews to crucify the Messiah. The claim of Jesus to a sole and exclusive authority in things spiritual, set aside all the pretensions of the High Priests to dominion over the consciences of the people. This was highly offensive to their pride, and the notion they had of their own spiritual jurisdiction. They considered Jesus as an invader of their rights and privileges, which they had possessed for some thousand years ; and they determined that his claim was blasphemy, and crucified him as a blasphemer of an establishment which God had set up, and which he had appointed them to maintain.

The Hierarchy of the Church of England agrees with no state of true religion which God hath appointed, either under the Old or New Testament dispensation ; but it agrees exactly with that Church authority by which our Lord Jesus

Jesuſ Christ was tried, condemned, and crucified.—This is a hard ſaying, my Lords; but I ſhall make it as plain as the Mitres on your heads. Attend to what follows, and you will certainly perceive the truth of the above obſervation.

The Hierarchy which God appointed among the Jews was hereditary, handed down from father to ſon, and could not be changed by the Civil Authority, as long as the Priests obſerved the Laws, and kept clear from intermeddling with matters of State. As the Kings of Israel were immediately appointed by God, as well as the Priests, they had a right, provided the Priests interfered in State Matters, to depoſe them, as Solomon did Abiathar; but if they held by their own province, and performed their duty, they had no right to meddle with them. The English Priſthood is not of this ſort; you, my Lords, cannot en-

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tail your office upon your eldest sons, unless His Majesty appoint them to Bishopricks. Here you see there is a material difference. Another considerable difference between the ancient Jewish Priesthood and your Hierarchy is,—The Jewish Priests were confined to matters of Religion, and were not admitted to secular employments: There were civil officers appointed to manage what pertained to the State; the Priests were only concerned with the matters of the Lord *. This is a prodigious difference, and worthy your attention. The Jewish High Priest offered sacrifices as well as received gifts; but our High Priests receive gifts, but offer no sacrifices. The chief design of the Priests was to offer sacrifices, and to make atonement for the sins of the people; in this they were typical of the great High Priest who was to come; but our High Priests can do none of these things; they do not pre-

* 2 Chron. xix. 11.

pretend

tend to offer sacrifices, and they cannot pretend to be types of the Messiah. All the Jewish Priests were circumcised in the flesh of their foreskin, which was a ritual they were obliged to undergo by divine appointment: I never hear, my Lords, that you copy after them in this particular. As long as the institution of the Jewish Hierarchy continued in its original purity, there was only one High Priest in the whole nation.—Our Hierarchy is very different; for we have six and twenty, at least always two—Or, if you please, we have twenty-four Chief Priests, and two High Priests; This was not the appointment under the Jewish Theocracy. It appears to be wholly a human invention, for which there is no warrant in the sacred Writings.

The Jewish Clergy had no legislative authority in Religion; they were obliged to direct their conduct according

to the Statutes which were given by the hand of Moses; they had no power either with or without their King, to add to, or diminish from, their system which the Almighty gave them. They could make no alterations without an express revelation from God, unless they were disposed to provoke him, as they frequently did. In this, my Lords, your constitution and theirs differ evidently. You assume extensive powers.—At various times, and in divers manners, those of your order have framed Canons, Articles Creeds, Liturgies, and Homilies, and changed them upon certain occasions, as your Wisdoms thought fit. I wish it would please your Reverences to change them again, seeing you pretend to have the same power your predecessors had.—Changes are lightsome, my Lords, and a proper alteration at this time would ease many of your Clergy. Pray, be so good as try another experiment: you cannot well

well remove farther from the Scriptures than you are at present. I think I have proved to a demonstration, that you differ widely from the appointment of God concerning the Clergy in the ancient Jewish Church ; so you have no Old Testament precept or example for your existence ; you agree however with the Pharisees under the corrupt state of the Jewish Church, by whose consent and authority Jesus Christ was crucified. This is the last branch of the proposition I promised to make good.—I shall now proceed to do it ;

1. When the Jews departed from the divine appointment concerning their Clergy, they increased the power and number of their High Priests. The original law authorised but one ; but in our Saviour's time there were two, *Annas* and *Caiaphas*. Those were something like our two Archbishops ; the one *Primate of Judea*, and the other *Primate of all Judea*.

2. They had also very extensive authority, at least they pretended to it ; they sat in the great Council of the nation, and had a mixed power joined with the Chiefs of the land : they were exceedingly like your Lords Spiritual assembled with the Lords Temporal in Parliament. Under the Theocracy this was not the practice ; for the matters of the Lord and the matters of the King were then kept distinct ; for they have never been mingled without great danger to the liberties of mankind. There are few men so perfect as to discharge two offices faithfully, when the perversion of both tends to their own private interest.—There is danger, my Lords, that a Clergyman in the character of a Civil Magistrate will sometimes stretch a point, with respect to those who are not found Churchmen, and lay the hand of his authority heavily on, when the object is suspected to be no friend to Clerical Jurisdiction.—And those

those who appeal from his jurisdiction as a magistrate, will be in jeopardy of having their sentence denounced with all the authority of a Priest, from the chair of verity.—Such amphibious creatures will frequently be tempted to squeeze a text on purpose to support their magisterial authority, and to shew how dominion is founded upon Grace, or rather Grace on dominion.

3. The Jewish Priests took away the Key of knowledge from the people: instead of reading and expounding the law and the Prophets, as they ought to have done, they rendered them vain through the substitution of their own traditions in their place, by which means the people were ignorant of the Scriptures, and means of Knowledge, except what the Priests were pleased to allow them in their stead. In place of the pure and incorruptible word of God, they were burdened with traditions and doctrines

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of men; they knew nothing as they ought to have known. In proportion as the Priests kept the people ignorant, they rendered them superstitious and bigoted, and ready to answer all the ends of their selfish policy. It was ignorance of the Scriptures which rendered the common people dupes to the Priests; for had they understood the doctrines of the Law and the Prophets, they would have soon perceived that they were imposed upon. The knowledge of divine revelation enlarges the mind, and makes men understand their own privileges. There never will be any danger from the power of the Clergy, if once the Laity understood the Scriptures. If the Commons and Lords of Great Britain ever happen to pay proper attention to the Scriptures, your high authority, my Lords, will soon come to an end. The Jewish Priests knew this, and did all they could to guard against it. You, Gentlemen, imitate

tate your brethren of Judea. Instead of reading and expounding the Scriptures to teach your people in divine knowledge, you put them off only with a few select passages, and a short discourse on some particular text. You load them with Creeds, Articles, and Canons, as the Jewish Priests did the people in their time; but you are sparing of the Scriptures, as if they would poison them.

Those who are first in the fashion for taste and learning, say, your Sermons are good, well digested, and finely composed. I have no objection to your compositions, my Lords, but a few of the plain purposes of a paragraph of Scripture would be far more edifying to your people. To read a large passage, and shew the scope and use thereof, would be of infinitely more service than all the laboured harangues of human eloquence. While you neglect to expound

pound the Scriptures, you take away the key of knowledge, which opens a door to a right understanding of the principles of the kingdom of heaven. I do not mean that human explanations of the word of God should pass for first principles, but they may help people to enquire, if the things are so, and may answer a very good purpose. Your Reverences preach but seldom, but would you expound Scripture, you might be excused all your other labours. A Sermon on some particular occasion we hear of now and then ; but these discourses are so interlarded with particular attachments, and the dignity of your order, that they can do very little good to poor miserable sinners. This is an idea you ought to consider, seeing you have your own guilt as other men, and stand in need of mercy like the rest of the guilty race of Adam. I shall say nothing of Original Sin, which has been so often disputed ; you, Gentlemen, have as much actual transgression

transgression as will require an abundance of mercy. The idea of mercy is not so very visible in your public performances ; there is far too much of the High Priest in them to make them agreeable to the wretched, miserable, blind, and naked. You will easily perceive he is a sinner that preaches to you, and perhaps your Lordships will think none of the least of them. It is a bad character, to be sure ; but a sinner, worth ten thousand a year, is greater than one who is worth very little. Your brethren the Pharisees had a great aversion at sinners, but they loved sin, and practised it to a great extent themselves. They reproached Jesu Christ for receiving sinners, and eating with them. This was cruel and unmerciful ; for though they were not disposed to do good to the miserable themselves, it was the highest barbarity to envy them happiness from the hands of others.

4. The chief and capital method which the Jewish Priests used to take away the key of knowledge from the people was the imposing of articles of their own composing upon them, and making them pass for the true meaning of the law; by this means they placed a padlock upon the Scriptures, lest the common people shouId find out the se-crets of the Priests.—There is some-thing in the nature of man which in-clines him to pursue after knowledge. When our Saviour came and taught the plain meaning of the law and the Pro-phets, the multitudes appeared en-amoured with his doctrine, they flocked after him, and gladly heard him. They perceived a visible difference between the plain Scripture doctrine which he taught them, and the abstruse and equi-vocal jargon of the Doctors. The Chief Priests were alarmed to see a non-subscriber make so free with the articles of the Church: they raised the cry against
Jefus

Jesus, and proclaimed the Church was in danger ; *If we let this man alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.* They perceived the danger of a free inquiry into Scripture truths, and suffering a teacher to pass unpunished, who discovered all the secret deceits of their craft. If once such a generous system as that which our Saviour proposed was received, it would open a door to the Gentiles as well as the Jews, and then the exclusive privileges of the Priests and Lawyers would be at an end. There would then be no occasion for the Temple, the place and nursery of Priests and Pharisees. This shews that the Priests discovered the intention of our Saviour's doctrine and miracles, and ex-cogitated as good a scheme as human wisdom could devise to guard against their influence. Caiphas was no fool when he said, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people, and not

not the whole nation perish. To him and the Priests, the downfal of Priesthood and the destruction of the nation were the same things. What is a nation to a dignified Clergyman without an extensive living? There are few of this character that would risk a living for a nation, though they have often almost ruined a whole nation for the sake of rich livings and preferments. Archbishop Laud is an example of this, who, to support his own honour, riches, and splendor, ruined both his Sovereign and himself, and brought a Civil War on the nation. The Jewish Priests would not give up the smallest degree of their authority, or part with a single tradition, and the reason was,—no body could tell how far a reformation might go. It might proceed so far as to endanger the places of the high Clergy, and the constitution would be in danger; for the Priests were a branch of the constitution. Once give way to a few peevish petitioners

ers in one thing, and then you may proceed till the whole fabric of the Hierarchy is taken down piece-meal. These arguments are very like those which your Chaplains and friends have offered, in defence of your Christian traditions. You have certainly learned your scheme from your friend Caiaphas, and the rest of your brethren in Judea.

The plan of your Hierarchy is not likely to last so long as that of the Jews ; and there is a good reason for it. The Jewish Hierarchy was once an ordinance of God ; but yours never was, nor ever can be. Our Saviour, by his death and resurrection, overturned the system of the Pharisees, and, in process of time, he will lay all your Mitres, my Lords, in the dust.

I have proved, that there is neither precept nor example in the Old Testament for men of your order ; and have
likewise

likewise demonstrated, that your Hierarchy is founded upon the same principles of those Clergymen who condemned our Saviour. It remains that I shew from the New Testament, that such an order of men, with such authority as you claim, is not to be found in the words of Christ, and the writings of his apostles.

This may very easily be settled, by considering those passages of the New Testament which have been used to support your authority. There is no occasion for the assistance of the Fathers in this controversy; those old Gentlemen were not guided by inspiration, and were as ready to err as other men. Your Lordships must stand the trial of plain Scripture evidence, and stand or fall in the opinion of all sober men, as your office and authority agrees with, or differs from, this divine Law-book.

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In the first place, let us inquire into the opinion of our Saviour concerning the power of his Church, or the power which he established therein in matters of faith and religion. The chapter where our text lies expresses his mind pretty plainly with respect to the dominion of the Clergy; *Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren;—and call no man your father upon earth, for one is your Father which is in heaven; neither be ye called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ.*

You certainly know, my Lords, that Rabbi was a degree of honour among the Jews, to which they annexed no small share of Jurisdiction. Rabboni was the highest title they had, and was of the same signification with my Lord; it was a title which Mary Magdalen gave to our Saviour, John xx. 16. and implied, that she honoured him in the

highest degree. There were three degrees of dignity to which the Jews also connected authority ; Rabbi, *Καθηγητής*, and Rabbon or Rabban ; all which our Saviour condemns.—He condemns the two first in this chapter, and for good reasons ; because they assumed power peculiar to him, and made free with his titles. The meaning of the word *Rabbi*, among the Jews, at this time, is very plainly pointed out by the ceremony of conferring this degree. When a person was thought worthy of this dignity, he was placed upon a chair raised above the rest of the company, and had a Key and a Table-book delivered to him ; the first was a symbol of his power and authority, the latter of his qualification for that honour. The Key he wore ever afterwards, as a sign to shew who he was, that he might not lose any of the honours due to his title. This title, in its whole import, our Saviour forbids in his Church.—The second

second, καθηγητῆς, which signifies a guide or leader, on whose word we may depend, he also forbids ; because there are none whose words are sufficient to direct Christians but the words of him who is their Lord, or such as he inspired by his Spirit, and infallibly guided into all truth. The last he sufficiently disapproves, Mark x. 42. *But Jesus called them unto him, and said unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise lordship over them, and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you ; but whosoever will be greatest among you, let him be your servant.* The conclusion which naturally arises from our Saviour's sentiments on this subject is,—That your titles of *Lord*, *Father*, and *Doctor*, are as expressly forbidden by our Saviour in any Church that is his, as unbelief or fornication ; and while you hold by these forbidden honours, you have no scriptural claim to

any membership in his Church. My Lords, the reasoning is plain and fair; and without you deny the words of Jesus Christ you cannot refuse the argument. These are spurious titles that your Reverences assume. If you are Lords in Christ's Church, pray, be so good as shew his authority for your dominion; if you are Fathers, shew us those children you have begotten to a lively hope by your doctrine; if you are Masters, be so kind as inform us, in what part of the New Testament you find a right to this honour. The demand is reasonable, my Lords, and you ought to comply with it for your own sakes. All men have a right to question your authority, till you shew that it is established on divine Revelation.

But perhaps our Saviour revealed the institution of Hierarchy to his apostles afterwards, when he sent the Holy Ghost upon the day of Pentecost.—

Let

Let us then turn over the sacred pages, and see if we can light upon this Revelation. The first time we meet with any word which sounds any thing like Episcopacy is in Acts i. 20. *His Bishoprick let another take.* The Greek word 'Επίσκοπην signified the office which Judas sustained among the Apostles, and from which he fell by his transgression, but has no relation to the power and authority of Lords Spiritual. Judas has far too many successors,—more than all the Apostles put together, and I hope your Lordships are not disposed to put in your claim among the rest. The word Bishoprick, in our language, signifies the Diocese of a Bishop, and not the office; but the Greek word here signifies the office which Judas sustained, which, during our Saviour's life, was to preach the Gospel, and work miracles. Our Saviour informs us, that there was to be no Lordships among his disciples; this 'Επίσκοπην could not then

consist of any power that Judas had above the rest of the Apostles ; for our Lord did not allow that as long as he lived, and after his death, we never find that ever his Apostles claimed any such power.

But let us proceed to *Acts xx. 28.* *Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost have made you overseers, Ἐπίσκοπος, to feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.* *For I know that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.* There, my Lords, you have the office of a Bishop described from a very beautiful comparison : it is to feed the flock as a shepherd does his sheep. How is that ? He feeds them in his Master's pastures, according to his commandment. They are his Master's flock, which he watches over and feeds, in those pastures which the Master of the sheep hath appointed.

This

This is a laborious office, and hath no authority annexed to it, except that of feeding the flock where the owner hath appointed. Is there any thing like your office in this? Is there any Church power here? any authority to make and impose Articles upon the Flock of Christ? Give the Flock of Christ their own food, which the great Master hath appointed them; suffer them to enjoy the incorruptible Word, which liveth and abideth for ever. Those Bishops mentioned in this Church of Ephesus were only Shepherds; so many Pastors to feed and watch over their respective flocks. There is a wide difference between a Shepherd and a Lord. The ideas are quite opposite. How would Lord Shepherd sound at Court? It is however just as good and true a title as my Lord Bishop, and just as plainly pointed out in this text. The New Testament is very plain in this point; it needs no criticism to find out its meaning.

ing. A Christian Bishop is a Pastor, whose office is to feed his flock with the word of Truth. You, my Lords, are a strange set of Pastors, to feed the flock committed to your care by substitutes. How are you sure they will take care of them, and feed them in your Master's pastures. There is not a farmer in England would allow his shepherds to use such freedom with his flocks as to commit the care of them to others, that they themselves may trifle and live at ease.— The Apostle saw your day afar off, and was sad.—He speaks of grievous wolves entering in, who would not spare the flock. He certainly had an eye to those Clergy who devour rich livings, but seldom or never preach to their people. All that we have found is far from being any proof of an Hierarchy.

In the beginning of Paul's Epistle to the Philippians he makes mention of Bishops and Deacons. Pray, my Lords,
how

how many Diocefian Bishops might there be in this City and its environs? For, according to all accounts, it was not very large, nor yet the Christians there very numerous. They must certainly have had very small livings in those times. But there is one thing which the friends of the Hierarchy often forget, that the word *Ecclesia* in the New Testament signifies an assembly of Christians meeting in one place, having full authority to discharge all religious duties, and perform all acts of discipline. There is some reason to conclude that the Saints, Bishops, and Deacons, were but one single congregation; this will put the friends of the Hierarchy to prove, that there were more congregations at Philippi than one, otherwise it will render their Bishopricks very small. It will be an hard task to prove an assembly in this city except one; and, till this is done, there is still wanting a New Testament proof for an Hierarchy.

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It is time now to proceed to Timothy and Titus, who are said to have been Diocesian Bishops. They appear only to have been Evangelists sent by the Apostles to set things that were wanting in order, and seem to have been altogether under the direction of Paul. All that they were to deliver was what they had received of him as an inspired Apostle, and when they had done that, their commission was executed. They ordained Bishops and Deacons, and put these Churches in order ; but there is not one word in all the Epistles to these two Brethren that implies any Jurisdiction they had over those Churches after they had settled Church Officers amongst them. They went away and left them after they had fulfilled their commission which the Apostle gave them. We find them elsewhere travelling with Paul, and never hear a single word of their returning to their Dioceſes any more. Timothy was called to Rome, and Titus

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to Dalmatia †; but there is no account that ever they visited Ephesus or Crete any more. It is indeed alleged that the continued to be Bishops, and carried their Episcopal Function along with them; but it would appear that they were never settled stately in any place more than the Apostles. By looking into Titus, i. 5, 6, 7. I find in the Apostle's opinion, that an Elder and a Bishop are all one. My Lords, let us read the passage; it is a very plain one. *For this cause have I left thee at Crete, that thou mayest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain Elders in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly.—For a Bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, nor self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre.* It ap-

† 2 Tim. iv. 9, 10, 11.

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pears exceedingly plain to an unlearned reader, that this *Elder* and *Bishop* are the very same office, and the officers have the very same qualifications assigned them. Now these Elders or Bishops, or whatsoever name they may receive, had no power either to ordain or do any thing else without the consent or approbation of the whole Church. Even when the Apostles were at their head, they never pretended to act without the whole Church; this sentiment is sufficiently plain from *Acts xv. 22*. *Then it pleased the Apostles and Elders, with the whole Church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Barnabas and Saul, &c.* It is not very likely, my Lords, that Paul would give a Power to Timothy and Titus to perform Episcopal Functions, which the whole College of Apostles and Elders would not take upon them when assembled together. As for the power of ordination, which your Reverences claim a

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sole right to, it is far from being plain that you have any more right than the poorest Curate in the kingdom ; for it is manifest that the Apostles never claimed it, as you do. They ordained Elders in every Church ; but then the Church was present to give their sanction to the deed : it might as well have been said, that they ordained Elders to every Church, if they had conceived they had a right to do it. Your Lordships cannot be offended when I refuse you your pretended exclusive privilege of ordination, when I deny that ever the Apostles had any such authority. You are not certainly greater than the Apostles of Jesus Christ. The Apostles and the Churches jointly might ordain Elders, or the Apostles and Elders with the Churches where they resided, might likewise do it ; but it does not appear from the whole New Testament, that either a single Apostle, or all of them together, ordained any Elders without the

the assistance and consent of the Churches where they were ordained. The Doctors, perhaps, were not thinking of this negative upon the idol of their Episcopal power. The Apostle Paul, though he was called of God to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, yet received his ordination in the Church of Antioch, without having the assistance of any of the Apostles. Even common teachers were allowed to join in this ceremony ; which shews that it was no exclusive privilege lodged in the hands of Bishops or Apostles. Some of your Lordships' Chaplains, I know, can say a great deal *about it, and about it*, on this passage ; but plain honest men will easily perceive that the Holy Ghost has always paid such a regard to the Churches, that after they were once organized, he has never permitted any officers to proceed without their approbation, when transactions were performed within their bounds.

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S E R M O N II. 79

As I have before proved from the Old Testament, that your Hierarchy has no foundation there, so I apprehend that I have shewed there is as little foundation for it in the New Testament. I shall therefore conclude this discourse.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N III.

MATTHEW, Ch. xxiii. ver. 4.

For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

THE burdens which the Church lays upon us are like the taxes laid on by the Government,—they are seldom removed; and what is worse, there is no mercy to be expected if we will not bear them patiently. Those who deal in religious matters, and do not partake of the influence of the Gospel, are generally more destitute of compassion than

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rakes and profligates. I have seen a poor wretch make an impression on a dissolute fellow, who could not pick a farthing from a very wealthy Gentleman in Black. The reason why persons of this last character are so backward in feeling for their fellow-creatures appears to me to be this ; they accustom themselves so frequently to speak what they do not believe, and are employed in what they have no affection for, that they render their minds insensible to all things where their interest is not concerned.

I have, in the preceding discourse, demonstrated, that our High Priests are true copies of the Jewish Pharisees, and that there is no foundation for the Hierarchy, either under the ancient Theocracy, or under the Gospel. I shall next endeavour to shew, that every kind of earthly supremacy in the Church is a burden grievous to be borne.

i. This

1. This will appear, *a priori*, by reasoning from the cause to the effect. If we consider the cause of this evil, it is the wicked one, who never meant well to the human race. Our Saviour affirmed this of the Pharisees:—*Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye will do.* By bringing over our first Parents to notions of Hierarchy, he fixed a burden upon them and their posterity, which is yet to be felt.—It was wicked spite in the *Devil* to envy our first Parents the happiness they enjoyed under the dominion of their Maker; his yoke is never grievous; obedience to his laws is the *highest* liberty. Satan seems to have perceived this, and made his attack in such a manner, that if he succeeded in his stratagem, he was sure to enslave the human race. He put a earthly Hierarchy into their head, and persuaded them, that if they would obey his injunctions, they should be as Gods, knowing *Good* and

Evil. Our foolish first Parents believed this *Father of Lies*, and swallowed the bait which he offered them. It is a pleasing idea to be at the head of affairs. Few are able to resist a temptation, which, in all respects, flatters their pride,—and to be *as Gods too*, was exceedingly pleasing. By this desire of supremacy, poor foolish man became a dupe to the artifice of an enemy, from whom no good could be expected. This new Hierarchy has entailed a burden of guilt upon the world, and rendered mankind absolute slaves. It is amazing how the same snare catches all the children of Adam; for almost all men love to be first in directing matters, which concern both themselves and others. The same principle which made our old Father seek to be as God, determines his offspring to seek to be *Monarchs* and *Bishops*. It was especially a spiritual dominion which the deceiver persuaded man to affect;—to know Good and Evil belongs to the Mind.

Mind.—God is the Supreme Judge in this matter; and to seek to attain it in any other way than the channel of his pleasure, is no less a crime than high treason against the Almighty. The Devil is the author of this treason; for *he abode not in the Truth*, but first rebelled against Heaven himself, and then seduced man into the same error. If any credit can be given to Milton, who seems to have been particularly acquainted with the history of Satan, it was the desire of dominion which inclined him to rebel. He desired to be Archbishop in Heaven, and all the religious Hierarchies have proceeded upon his principles. Milton says, that he envied the pre-eminence of the Messiah, whom he found that JEHOVAH was to exalt above all principalities and powers; he therefore wanted to supplant him, or at least to share with him in dominion. My Lords, you cannot assign a better reason for Diocesan Episcopacy than this,

which Milton has suggested. I am almost sorry to pursue this subject, for fear I shall argue downwards, till I come to the Bishops. The top of the fabric of Hierarchy over men's souls was *Lucifer*; from him it descended to our *first Parents*, from them to their son *Cain*; *Nimrod* is said to have assumed it, and set up the worship of fire, and to have imposed the articles of his Creed on all who were under his jurisdiction on pain of burning. It came down to Nebuchadnezzar, who set up an idol in the plains of *Dura*, and obliged all to worship it, on pain of death.—The Jews seem to have learned this principle at Babylon, and brought it home with them to their own land; then it fell into the hands of the High Priests, Scribes, and Pharisees. Diotrephees catched it in the days of the Apostles; from him it was carried to Asia and Africa; it proceeded westward, and settled for a long time at Rome. But it came to England, where

where it yet remains in the office and temper of your Lordships, who bind heavy burdens upon men's shoulders. Grievous is the cause of all Hierarchies in matters of Religion, and hard to be borne. Who would not think it hard to be under the jurisdiction of the *Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience?* This is a grievous burden, my Lords, that men must be obliged to submit to a power which has done so much injury to mankind. Compare the cause and the effect, and you will find them as like one another as children can possibly be like their father. All Hierarchies in the Church enslave the Consciences of men, who are such fools to submit to them. Satan could not establish his Hierarchy among the human race till he made them slaves, and corrupted their feelings for Liberty. He became first Lord of their Faith, and then became Master of their Passions. The Devil was

the first created Being that imposed Articles of Belief upon men ; he persuaded them that the Almighty's Articles of Faith which he imposed were not true, and foisted in his own falsehood in place of them ; he did it by a sort of comment, as your Lordships compose Articles. *God knows*, says the Devil, *ye shall not surely die* ; but *ye shall be as Gods, knowing Good and Evil*. This is something like your Thirty-nine Articles ; it may be understood more ways than one ; it has a double meaning. There is no doubt but God knew all things concerning life or death ; but the Devil did not explain his terms, but played the sophist. In a word, he wanted his Articles to pass, and did not hesitate to play a trick to have them received. If once he could obtain credit to his doctrine, he knew his main point was gained ; it would be easy to enslave men if once he had possession of the heart. *It is with the heart men believe*. The meaning of all human Articles

Articles are the same ; the intention of them is to bring men over to the dominion of the imposers, that they may be their Masters in things religious. Those who gain their point in this particular perform but a devilish trick when they have done. It is only doing what Satan has done before them, forming a scheme to support an Hierarchy. The Devil's system of Articles was not all lies either ; there was far too much truth in his Doctrine. He said that our first Parents should know Good and Evil if they tasted the forbidden fruit ;—and so they did with a vengeance : they knew themselves ruined by losing the favour of their Maker.—It was not because Satan's Articles were all false that they deserved to have been rejected, but because they were substituted in the room of the word of God, in the same manner that Bishops impose human Articles. Such a man as Bishop Burnet, who had a gift of explaining Articles, might find

a sense in which the words of Satan might be taken, that any good Churchman might subscribe them. I can assure you, My Lords, that there are a number of as lying-like things in the Thirty-nine Articles, which his Grace has made a shift to make look tolerably decent. But all this is sensual and devilish, acting the part of Satan, who persuaded man that God's word was not sufficient, but needed some additaments. There is not the smallest difference between the practice of that old Usurper and that of your Lordships, if you consider matters impartially. It was for the sake of having dominion over men's Consciences that Lucifer imposed his Creed ; and for the same reason you impose your Articles. Be not offended at the comparison. The author of Hierarchy is of a high extract ; he was once a principality and power in Heaven, though, for usurping the place of God, he is now a fallen Spirit, and *reserved in chains of darkness till the judgment*

ment of the great day. There is the end of usurping unjust dominion, my Lords ; such as the cause is, so will the effect be.

But if we shall argue *a posteriori*, from the effects to the cause, the Hierarchy will appear a burden grievous to be borne. As from the smallest pile of grafts we may reason up to the Deity ; so from the lowest branch of an earthly Hierarchy in Religion, we are led to the Devil. This is perhaps not delicate enough for the ears of your Lordships ; but it is plain, and what is more, it is *too true*. Let us try if we can make this out. Have therefore a little patience, and you shall see how soon a person who comes into the hands of the Church comes to his *ne plus ultra*. For example, he begins with a Parish Clerk, Priests, or Churchwardens, and refuses to pay for bread he never tasted, and wine he never drank ; what is the consequence ? He is next put into the hands of the Apparitor,

Apparitor, from thence into the Proctors in the Spiritual Court ; he is judged by the Chancellor, without a Jury of his Peers, at last excommunicated and delivered to the Devil ; so that it is manifest that there is but one step between your Lordships and Satan. This is a short way of landing in the hands of the tormentor. Whatever part of the Hierarchy we begin at, our last stage is at the Devil ; unless we submit in all things to our ghostly guides. —— This is a burden grievous to be borne ; whether we move upwards or downwards, we are oppressed, and troubles await us every where, while we are under the dominion of High Priests. It is a fearful thing to fall into their hands. Chamberlayne tells us, “ That if a man refuses to “ answer, or otherwise to satisfy the “ Court, he is excommunicated or ex- “ cluded from the Church ; or if not “ from the Church, yet from the com- “ munion of the Lord’s Supper ; is dis- “ abled

“ abled to be Plaintiff in a suit at law, “ &c.” If a man does not satisfy the Court, which your Lordships know is not easily done, he is presently deprived of a right to live ; and if he happens to die under the sentence of the Clerical Court, he is denied a Christian Burial, and left in the hands of the Devil. *Lord have mercy on us !* What a burden is this, and grievous to be borne ? The honestest man in the world may land in Hell after this fashion, provided your sentences stand ratified.

I have shewed, by reasoning from the cause to the effect, and from the effect to the cause, that a temporal Hierarchy in Spiritual Things is a burden grievous to be borne.

I shall now conclude with some improvement of the subject.

It will appear manifest, from what has been said, that your Lordships ought to be servants

fervants in the Church, and not Lords over God's heritage : that you ought to lay aside the Articles, those badges of Popery, and all the fopperies of that Antichristian Hierarchy, which you still retain. When you know that many of your Clergy want to be eased of those burdens, you ought to grant them relief. You are holding a power which is not founded in right, and which, at best, is tyranny, and disgraceful to human nature. There can be no real glory in shackling the Consciences of your fellow men and brethren. It is the glory of the saints of the other world to cast down their Crowns before the Throne of the Lamb. Throw away your Mitres, my Lords, and become plain Ministers ; your livings will be then better bestowed upon you, and you yourselves will be more useful. It is not long before they shall drop from your brows, and your Honour shall be laid in the dust. You now claim Honours like Gods, but *ye shall*

shall die like men, and fall like one of the people. Suffer the word of exhortation, and listen to it.—There is more truth in what has been said than you are aware of.—Allow your Consciences to speak, and listen to their admonitions. The King of Kings comes to reward every one according to their works. It will be a solemn day, my Lords ;—you never saw the like of it at Court.—Before his face the Heavens and Earth shall flee away ; he shall sit on the Throne of his Glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations ; Kings and Bishops shall be there : your *justum & tenacem propositi virum*, which hath endured the *civium ardorem prava jubentium*.—Your obstinacy in refusing the just demands of your brethren will not support you when the heavens are on fire. I think I hear you say,

*Si fractus illabatur orbis,
Impavidos ferient ruinæ.*

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It will not do, my Lords. You never saw any thing like this solemnity. The Apostle John says, *The Books shall be opened.*—The Books of your Spiritual Courts, the Books of Conscience, and the Books of Divine Revelation.—Not a secret shall be hidden.—You stare! but you shall find it true.—What has long been hid shall be made manifest, clear as a sun beam.—You have had your good things in this life.—It would hardly be reasonable to give any more.—Remember the rich man, my Lords.—Ah! he had his good things, as you have now in this life, and little thought of another world;—*but he died, and so must you:* after death there is a judgement.—This, your Lordships will perhaps think too grave discourse for men in high life,—who are accustomed to courtly phraseology. There is nothing mean in this, my Lords,—it is even worthy of a Bishop's consideration;

consideration ; and whether you think so or not, you will find it true.

We may see, from what has been said, that there is not a Clergyman in Great Britain can vindicate your Hierarchy without perverting the Scriptures. All your Advocates shew evident marks of distress, when they attempt to plead your cause.—Their arguments are forced and unnatural, and carry no evidence along with them ; they may confuse weak minds, but will have small influence upon men of understanding. All their criticism on *Greek words*, and their quotations from the Fathers, shew how they are pinched to make out their arguments. They would do better to follow nature, and speak plainly.—Your Cause is tolerably well understood at this day ; few believe in their Consciences that the Hierarchy is a divine institution :—but it has, my Lords, what is more engaging to flesh and blood to su-

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port it,—*large yearly incomes*, and acts of Parliament. These will serve for a season to support you against all rational conviction, and you will take all the rest to a longer day. My Lords, I do not envy you your good things; but it is hard you should glory in holding men under your lash.—Let us have a toleration to serve God according to the dictates of our own Consciences, without molestation, and we shall ask no more.—You might, my Lords, suffer the Bill for the Relief of Dissenters to pass without opposition, for it can do you no good to oppose it;—but whether you do or not, it will give them small concern, provided you let them alone.—Before we part, my Lords, let us pray:—May all Church Hierarchy soon be laid in the dust, and all human Articles demolished;—may we have the word of God for the sole Articles of our Faith, and honest Teachers to put us in mind of our duty;—may our Faith be free, and our Love un-

S E R M O N III. 99

feigned ;—may we serve the one Lord, and obey him from the heart ;—may your Lordships obtain repentance and remission of sins, and may we all rejoice in one another's happiness. *Amen.*

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S E R M O N IV.

1 TIMOTHY, Ch. iii. ver. 2.

A Bishop must be blameless ;—apt to teach ;—not given to filthy lucre ;—not covetous, &c.

MY Lords, these are qualifications rarely to be found among Bishops.—It is an high character to be blameless, and is seldom to be found upon the Sacerdotal Bench. Your Lordships will, before we proceed, please to consider the Scripture idea of a Bishop ; and I must direct your attention to the opinion of one who knew well the mean-

ing of the word *Bishop*.—*Titus*, by your Church, is said to have been ordained *the first Bishop of the Cretians*; and Paul says to him, *For this cause have I left thee at Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain Elders in every Church, as I had appointed thee.* *If any man be blameless,—for a Bishop must be blameless as the Steward of God.* The Apostle Paul affirms, that a Bishop and an Elder are the same office. There is not one word of a *Bishoprick* or a *Dioceſe* here. At this time Clerical Jurisdiction, and large Temporalities were unknown in the Christian Church. But to proceed to consider the sentiments which are manifestly contained in the text, and its connection, it must be observed, in the first place, that a Bishop, who is blameless, must have the characters recommended by the Apostle. *He must be the husband of one wife;* which intimates that young, vain, light men are not fit to be Elders

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or Bishops in a New Testament Church, and that they ought to be persons who neither live in Polygamy, nor devote themselves to Celibacy, contrary to nature. It is not to be supposed, my Lords, that men who live as you, in luxury and voluptuousness, can remain chaste, without the use of that appointment which the Lord of the Church has instituted to keep her members holy. Before a man is preferred to so many thousands of yearly income, it is but reasonable he should do some service to the State, and maintain a family like other Christians. The Apostle recommends a wife to every Bishop; and it appears to be a task that will greatly pinch the Critics to prove that any man has a right to the office of a Bishop while he remains unmarried. The words of the Apostle are both explicit and express. A Bishop *must* be the husband of one wife. It is a fair inference from the text, that such Bishops as are unmarried

are not blameless. It is manifestly contrary to the express words of the Apostle, to prefer men to offices in the Church who behave expressly contrary to the express letter of the Scripture.

There is one positive idea expressed in the context, and that is, that a Bishop must work. He must not remain idle in the Church, nor devour livings without discharging the duties which belong to the enjoyment thereof. The Apostle knew of no sinecures in his day; all those Bishops whom he authorised were working Bishops, men who applied themselves to the work of the Ministry, and were obliged to be diligent in serving the Church.

My Lords, you cannot prove that any New Testament Bishops hired Curates or Chaplains to perform the drudgery work of the Church, and remained idle themselves. The writings
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of the Apostles suggest not the least hint concerning a substitute; those Elders performed their work in *propria persona*, and did not like you serve the Lord by proxy. The idea of substitutes in religious exercises is merely a creature of Civil Government, and belongs to the kingdoms of this world. You cannot find it in all the New Testament. You therefore ought in conscience to renounce it, seeing you have no authority for it in all the Scriptures.

The Apostle Paul was a Bishop, but he wrought hard and lived meanly; his house was hired, and the Churches supported him by their private bounties.— And, my Lords, he sometimes wrought with his hands, that he might not be burdensome. Wherever the Apostles went, they always preached the Gospel, and instructed the Churches as Ministers of Jesus Christ.—I wish I could say as much for your Lordships. You would think yourselves disgraced to preach to a poor

a poor country audience.—But to say the truth, you seldom preach at all, except before the Court, or His Majesty, and as seldom in that way as possible. You practice as if the Apostle had said, **H**e that desires the office of a Bishop desires a good benefice; for it appears to be the sole object of your attention. Your zeal for tythes demonstrates this fact; were your zeal for the success of Religion as conspicuous, perhaps the publick would think the expence better bestowed; but seeing you do not work, the generality of the nation think you ought to eat less.—And now, that we have come to this point, it may not be beside the purpose to settle the subject of Tythes before we proceed to consider the other characters of a Christian Bishop, and see how far you are to blame in this particular. This subject is a tender one, and some will think that it should be touched gently; but, my Lords, we must just take it as it is, and discuss,

discuss it the best way we can. You hold your right to Tythes either *Jure divino* or *Jure humano*. If you hold them by the first tenor, this right must be some where to be found in the New Testament ; for what is said concerning them under the law, refers to a system which is long ago abolished. You pretend to be the successors of the Apostles, and not of the Jewish Priesthood, and ought therefore to behave like your Predecessors. Let us see what were their claims concerning Tythes. They happen to put in no claim at all, and for a good reason ; because the law concerning Tythes was changed by the coming of the true High Priest. Hear what the Apostle says upon this subject, Heb. vii. 12. *For the Priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law : for he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.* Alas, my Lords ! here are *Tythes, Altars, and Priests*, demolished at once.

once. The Apostle even defies you to prove your own existence as Priests under the Gospel. This is a most merciless argument in favour of Tythes. The law concerning them is changed, and has no longer any force upon Christians.

But perhaps it may be said, the Apostles lived under a government which was not Christian, where there was no connection between the Church and the State, and could not put in their claim for Tythes for want of an alliance with the Civil Powers. But how could they have put in such a claim when the law was changed? This would have been to claim what they had no right to; for the right depended upon a Divine Law, which is now changed by an act of the Legislator who gave it at first. But had Tythes been of Divine right, it is not reasonable to suppose but Divine Providence would have allowed the first believers a share thereof, as well as those who now

now pretend to be their successors, and have exhibited a pattern for future ages to practise by. For although the Apostles might not have it in their power to claim Tythes from the Roman powers, yet had Tythes been of Divine right, they would certainly have claimed them from Christians, or at least left some hints that they were to be paid in some future period. But they say nothing concerning them, except that the law which related to them was laid aside and changed. But seeing they are not of Divine right, let us see how far they may be lawful *Jure humano*. I am sorry, my Lords, that in the very beginning of this argument, you are obliged to set the laws of your Church and the laws of the New Testament in direct opposition to one another; for if Tythes are contrary to divine laws, no human authority can make them lawful. The Apostle says, the law is changed by the coming of Christ; and you have invented a *Succedaneum* to supply its place.

Is not this substituting a human invention in the Church, in the place of an abolished statute, contrary to the meaning of the Legislator. But suppose you hold your right to Tythes by the laws of the land, laws that were formed several centuries ago, then it is evident that those laws could secure nothing to you except what was then taken into the idea of Tythes. The various improvements in agriculture were not understood by the ancient laws concerning Tythes. There are many things which you claim the Tythe of, which were not then known, and could be no object of those laws; therefore your claim is unjust, because it is founded upon no law. There are many exotics which would never have grown in British soil, if the industry of ingenious men had not brought them from foreign parts, and cultivated them at a great expence. Those wilds which Gentlemen and Farmers have cultivated, would never have brought any Tythes

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to the Church, had not the substance of those industrious persons been expended to cultivate and manure them; and is it reasonable that men who have not expended one farthing in the improvement, should reap the fruits of other men's substance and industry? It certainly could never be the meaning of a rational law to hinder the progress of improvement of lands by agriculture, which the laws concerning Tythes must do, as they are at present applied; for what man will ever spend his substance in improving waste grounds, when he knows that others, of whom he is by no means advantaged, will come in for a share of the profits, and demand a dividend of all he hath gained by much toil, industry, and expence? It is more than the Clergy have any right to, from any advantage they are to the publick, or service to the government; for it is manifest that the subjects are as wise and as loyal where they are taught by

Teachers

Teachers which are supported by their own bounty, as those who are instructed by the Tythe Gentry. My Lords, it is shameful for men who profess to direct others in the ways of truth and righteousness, to give such examples of oppression and injustice. Your Tythes were established in times of Popery, and are mere fragments of Popish tyranny and superstition. It is time to give them up, and accept of a *modus* which may be competent to support you like other Christians. If you carry this point too far, the time may come when a root and branch law may shake the pillars of your Hierarchy, and lay your Mitres in the dust. When once the lay part of the nation seriously consider this point, they will find means to have themselves instructed in religion at a less expence, and enjoy the fruits of their possessions without having them decimated by the Clergy.

When I consider the doctrine of Tythes as claimed by the laws of the land, it suggests to me an expedient to remove them. They are not essential to the English constitution, and may be removed without the smallest infringement of *Magna Charta*. There have been many laws made of late years, which have had more the appearance of encroachments upon the constitution of England than one for altering Tythes. May not the Legislature interpose, and give us new Tythe Laws, more advantageous for the welfare of the nation? Your Lordships will say, Stop there; consider how you will carry such a law through the house of Peers. True, my Lords, it is a difficult point, and will require some time: the nation must be made ripe for it; but when that time comes, twenty-six votes will not prevent it. You have no remedy except one to prevent a Bill for a new Tythe Law, and that is to encourage a general dissipation

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of the age, and promote ignorance ; which, for the most part, you do. But in all this are you blameless ? do you answer the character of Christian Bishops, and pay proper attention to what the Spirit says to the Churches ? You pretend to be Spiritual men, and assume very splendid and high titles. *Lords Spiritual* is a magnificent character ; it sounds high, and is vastly flattering ;— but when you are not possessed of the Apostolical Qualifications of a Bishop, all men of understanding must despise you. Were it not that I know how hard it is to commend truth to the consciences of men of your character, I would address your consciences, and commend the truth to you in the sight of God : I would say that you are miserable sinners, who make void the word of God through your traditions ;— who impose your own inventions, instead of the appointments of Christ, and his Apostles ;— who love to be called of men

Rabbi,

Rabbi, and are pleased with greetings in the Markets ;—who eat the fat, and devour the weak of the flock of Jesus Christ ;—who delight in the honours of the kingdoms of this world, and despise the true glory of Christian Bishops ;—who bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders, and will not touch them with one of your fingers. For all these things you shall receive the greater condemnation. *Condemnation*, my Lords, is a hard word, and what you are but seldom accustomed to hear ; but your hearts, in your grave moments, must condemn you ;—and God is greater than your hearts, and will also condemn you. I wish you would consider how empty are your honours ! how dangerous your present situation ! Remember that a Bishop must be blameless : ye are far from answering that pure character. Your very office as Diocesan Bishops, is unscriptural

scriptural, and impure ; your titles, as *Lords Spiritual*, are sinful ; they are heathenish signatures of honour, unworthy of Christians ; for our Saviour has declared, *They shall not be among his disciples* *. It is a dreadful thought, an't please your Reverences ! for it plainly implies that you are none of his disciples. No Lordship or dominion can ever prevail among them, without giving our Saviour the lie, who hath said expressly, *It shall not be so among you*. You see the alternative, my Lords ; you must either give up your honours, and become Christians, or rank with Heathens, and remain unbelievers. All who believe the doctrines of the New Testament must consider you as Heathens, while you assume *Lordship*, sit in Parliament, and receive honours of men, and one another. You smile ! but the subject is grave :—there is a period to come will spoil your mirth, and suggest grave sen-

* Matth. xx. 26.

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gements to your minds. The King of Kings will come to bring all men to an account; and those who should have been Stewards of God must then settle all their reckonings. It is an awful thought, and therefore I shall conclude this discourse.

H 3

S E R M O N

S E R M O N V.

1 TIMOTHY, Ch. iii. ver. 2, 3.

A Bishop must be blameless,—given to hospitality,—apt to teach ;—not greedy, of filthy lucre ;—not covetous.

BLAMELESS! It would be a happy thing for Bishops, as well as for the nation, if they only but half fulfilled this character. It was observed, that it belongs to the office of a Bishop to work ; those who bear this office are not to be idle, otherwise they *are to blame*. Let us inquire into the work and employment of a Christian Elder, or Bishop,

and see, my Lords, how far you are blameless, or guilty.—And as I mean to keep strictly to the Scriptures, I hope your Lordships will give serious attention,

1. A Bishop must preach *the word**; the word of Revelation is to be the substance of their preaching. Bishops must publish to the Churches what has been before taught by Moses, the Prophets, our Saviour, and his Apostles; they are not left to pursue their own devices, nor to teach men the dreams of their own imaginations; but to keep strictly to the word of truth. They must work in the Scriptures, collect the various truths therein contained, and exhibit them to the view of all who hear them. The simple truths in the Scriptures need only to be fairly told, and represented in their own native simplicity, to produce the effects they were intended for. There is no occasion for the trappings of human

* 2 Tim, iv. 2.

oratory

oratory to recommend the truths of the Gospel, my Lords, they need only to be told. The Greek word *κηρύσσω*, signifies to publish or proclaim, as a Herald or Crier does a proclamation: you have nothing to do but to publish the glad-tidings of Heaven to sinners, and leave the consequence to the Almighty. The importance of the Preacher adds nothing to the word which is preached. A Right Reverend Father in God has no more authority in preaching than the meanest Curate. The words that are spoken alone are fit to fulfil their own intention. All the fine periods of a Tillotson, joined with the swaggering theatrical buffoonery of Whitefield, will ever be insufficient to reform the heart of a sinner, or to convert any wicked person from the evil of his way.

Preaching is a work which requires much labour and industry; the Bishop must bring out of the treasure of Revela-

tion things new and old;—must declare the ancient ways of God to man, in shewing mercy to the *worthless* in all ages. And the new displays of his grace and favour in continuing his loving-kindness to those that know him. This work does not consist in preparing a stiff formal discourse, forged in a closet, and picked out of a number of musty sermons, on purpose to be presented at St. James's, as a propine for the Court. This, my Lords, is dry work, and exceedingly unprofitable for men. The New Testament overseers do not serve the Lord with that which costs them nothing; they search the Scriptures, and from the abundance of that treasure enrich the minds of others: *Out of Moses and all the Prophets, in all the Scriptures, they shew the things which concern Jesus Christ.* This requires reading of the true sort for a Bishop, and will serve the wisest man that ever lived, to ponder his whole lifetime. The most perfect and rational knowledge is

is to be found in the word of God ; for it teaches us what God is to us, and what are our duties to him, which to know is of infinite importance to all men.

The word of God exhibits a grand and glorious reason of hope for guilty men ; it declares that God is reconciled to sinners on account of the work of his Son ; and that, on account thereof, God is just when he justifies the ungodly. It proclaims this as the sole foundation of a sinner's hope before the Almighty ;— and declares that all who are persuaded of this truth will be careful to maintain good works. It shews us what we can do, and what we cannot do, in matters of religion. It fully manifests that we all can do *more* than we are *disposed* to do ; and yet that our most perfect performances are not sufficient to acquit us in the sight of one who knows our hearts. From the word of God we are informed, that those who would enter into life must keep

keep the commandments ; and yet it also shews, that there was never any, *except the man Christ Jesus*, who did so. From hence it is manifest, that is impossible for any man, under the influence of sin and prejudice, to please God ; and that in this grand point, our hopes of forgiveness must rest upon the atonement of Jesus Christ ; and that, even in this, Revelation declares that the law is not dishonoured, but magnified ; that it is not Antinomianism to trust to the obedience of Christ for our acceptance with God ; for if this were the case, all the Apostles were Antinomians. But, my Lords, if plain Scripture will not offend you, I will present to you a few passages to prove the above observations. *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus : whom God hath before ordained to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are*

are past, through the forbearance of God ; to declare at this time his righteousness : that he might be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. Where is boasting then ? It is excluded. By what law ? of works ? Nay ; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law *. For if righteousness come by the law, then is Christ dead in vain †. But that no man is justified by the works of the law in the sight of God, it is evident : for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith : but, the man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ‡. If you do not teach these doctrines which are so clearly set down by the Apostles, you are not blameless, and ought not to be Bishops.

* Rom. iii. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.

† Gal. ii. 21.

‡ Gal. iii. 11, &c.

2. Bishops must watch; they must watch every opportunity of edifying those whom they are appointed to oversee.—For this reason it is required that they be present where their work is. The command is, *Be instant in season, and out of season.* The Greek word signifies *to be near at hand*; which supposes that a Christian Bishop should remain upon the spot where his work is; for how can a man watch over a Church where he is not present among the Members? Non-residence was not known amongst the Apostolick Bishops, except when they were called by the Apostles to assist them in some important work.—A Christian Bishop is like one upon his guard, who must keep his post, and not desert it; and his charge is like that of a shepherd over a flock, which requires his presence and attendance. All the New Testament Elders had the cure of souls; and we read not of one sinecure in the whole of the Apostolick writings. If there is any such

such thing as responsibility in the office of a Bishop, how can those expect to render a fair account to God of those souls which they commit to the care of other men, with whom they are very little acquainted. But, my Lords, you perhaps imagine, that rule and government is all that pertain to your office ; and that when you appoint sufficient persons to take care of the Churches, you are no further accountable. But this is altogether problematical ; for a Bishop cannot be blameless, unless he teach those over whom he is appointed Overseer.

This duty extends to the Bishop himself ; he must watch over himself ; take care that his pride, or his other passions, do not mislead him, or make him do either more or less than Divine Authority requires.—Men who are advanced to authority, if they are not humble, will be ready to stretch themselves beyond their commission, and seek to

tyrannize over the members of the Church:—and the higher that their ideas of power are, the greater will their tyranny be. It is necessary, on this account, that Bishops be watchful over themselves, lest being puffed up with pride, they fall into the temptation of the Devil.

I observed that Bishops ought to watch, lest they do more or less than is required of them by the word of God. To pretend to do what is not required in Revelation, is equally absurd with coming short, and equally sinful. Those works of supererogation, which the Bishops of all established Churches have substituted in the place of divine ordinances, are none of the smallest of their provocations: and those Clergymen who assume the office of Bishops ought carefully to watch, lest they vend their *own nostrums, for divine institutions.*

But

But watching, in Scripture, is set in opposition to idleness; it implies a propensity of mind to one's duty, and supposes an actual fulfilment of the office which a person engages in. To be watchful supposes that a Christian Bishop attends to all the parts of his office, as it respects the glory of God, and the happiness of the souls of men. Instead of watching the levee of Princes, and cringing at Court for worldly preferment, a New Testament Bishop watches every opportunity to instruct mankind in the truths of the Christian Religion, and the duties of morality. Instead of imitating the great men of this world in *pride* and *ambition*, a Christian Bishop will study to imitate Jesus Christ in *humility*, *meekness*, and *love*; and will, with patience, watch every occasion to condescend to men of low degree. My Lords, poor people have seldom access to your presence; and you study on all occasions to avoid having any intercourse with the vulgar.

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You no sooner remove your hands from their heads, upon the day of Confirmation, than you give them up, and, with a watchfulness becoming your dignity, avoid having any thing to do with them ever after; unless by some misfortune they chance to come into the Spiritual Court, and then you watch over them with a vengeance.

3. A Bishop must feed the flock of God over whom he is made a Bishop. This is an Apostolick Injunction *, and ought, my Lords, to be seriously considered. The souls of men need nourishment as well as their bodies, and the Gospel which you ought to preach has made ample provision for the spirits as well as for the mortal part of the members of the Church. Divine truth is the food of the mind, which ought to be made known to men, on purpose to be food for their souls. When our minds are

* Act xx. 28.

entertained with the true and certain hopes of a blessed immortality, upon principles consistent with the revealed character of the Almighty, and rejoice in the hope of that glory which is promised to be revealed in the sons of God, they may be said to be nourished. And the evidence of mental nourishment is improvement in pure sentiments, which discover themselves by obedience to *God's law*, and *love to all mankind*. A Bishop must feed his flock, or nourish the minds of his hearers with heavenly truth;—preach the word of salvation as it is revealed in the word of God, and lay aside all conjectures concerning eternal life, which are not taught in the sacred Oracles. The old story concerning *doing* and *living* by *the works of the law*, the Gospel has altogether set aside; and God of his mercy has given us a *better hope*, established upon the death of his *own Son*.—This, my Lords, is the true basis of morals to Christian men, who are con-

strained by the love of Jesus Christ ; and they shew that their souls are nourished by the truths of the Gospel, by their sincere attachment to every moral duty. It will perhaps surprise your Lordships to hear it affirmed, that all such as have the good hope of forgiveness through the atonement of Jesus Christ, are the most remarkable for strictness of conversation and purity of life ; for suppose they do not obey God on purpose to be saved, they obey him from a more noble and more powerful principle. They do his will because he is *gracious, merciful, and full of compassion*, because he has sent Jesus Christ to redeem them by his obedience unto the death.— And if your Reverences please, they obey him *because they love him*. That idea which rules in the *tenor* of your printed Sermons concerning *good works*, overturns at once the whole system of Christianity. You suppose an effect without a cause, which is a thing impossible ; and

and require sinners to work for salvation, without considering that aversion they have against truth. I shall suppose a case, which is no way impossible, that His present Majesty should promise to make *Momus a Bishop*, upon condition that he should translate *Sanchoniathon*, or write a version of *Homer* a degree better than that of Mr. Pope,—when *Momus* could only *read prayers*, and did not understand a word either of the *Phænician* or *Greek languages*.—When, an't please your Lordships, would *Momus* come to the enjoyment of his Bishoprick? This, you will perhaps say, would be an *unreasonable* task, and at the first so frightful, that no person in such a case would engage in it.—True, my Lords; but the gentleman might have minded his books when he was at school, and the thing would have been both possible and probable. You must perceive, my Lords, that if *Momus* must have a Bishoprick, he must receive it *speciali gratia*;

gratia; and not by works. There are several things in the law of God, which, if a sinner must do on purpose to obtain forgiveness, or enjoy the Divine Favour, are as difficult for persons under that character to perform, as for an unlearned man to translate *Homer* or *Sanchoniathon*. The very notion of requiring a thing that is impossible, tends to create in the minds of the person of whom it is required an *aversion* against the task, and a *disgust* at the person who requires it. When you therefore tell your *hearers* or *readers* that they must do something to be justified, and their own hearts inform them, that it is a task beyond their power, must not this very thought create an antipathy against *that law* which requires impossibilities, and form in the minds of sinners a stronger aversion against the truth.

It will be but poor nourishment for the souls of men to inform them, that they

they must perform what their own experience, and the Scriptures, have told them it is not in their power to fulfil. The Apostles fed the flock of God in another manner ; they taught sinners and the Churches, that God was just when he justified the ungodly ; and that it was not for works of righteousness which sinners performed, but according to his mercy he saved them :—And yet, after they had instructed men in those doctrines, we do not find that they became more deficient in morals than others, but rather became examples of good works, and true imitators of Jesus Christ. My Lords, there were, in those days, a set of men who went about to establish their own righteousness ; and what was the consequence ? they did not attain to that righteousness which pleased God. Instead of submitting to the Gospel account of Righteousness, they contrived a traditional scheme of their own, which excluded the true notion of Divine Righteousness ;

ousness; the consequence of all which was, they perverted the law of God, and substituted their own dogmas in the room of Divine appointments. Instead of feeding the flock with the truths of his own word, they imposed their vain traditions upon those who were under their jurisdictions, and cursed them. *soundly* when they would not receive them. The idea of feeding the flock of God suggests another sentiment to your Lordships; and it is that of feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked. Your large benefices afford you an opportunity of feeding a great number of hungry Christians. Twelve or fifteen thousand pounds will go a great way. By the assistance of the *Deans* and *Prebendaries*, your Lordships might afford near 100,000 pounds *per annum* for the relief of the poor, and yet leave yourselves sufficient to support a Christian life. It would have a great effect upon the poor, and make them receive your advices with more readiness.

nefs.—But to give your Lordships a little rest before we proceed to consider the other qualifications of Christian Bishops, I shall conclude this Discourse, and say, *Amen.*



S E R M O N VI.

1 TIMOTHY, Ch. iii. ver. 2.

A Bishop must be blameless,—given to hospitality,—apt to teach ;—not greedy of filthy lucre ;—not covetous.

HOSPITALITY, my Lords, is a Scriptural qualification of a Bishop; and without being given or inclined to the practice thereof, no person has a right to that office. $\Phiιλοξενος$ signifies a lover of strangers, or persons who can be of no advantage by either their interest or favour to a Bishop.—Its primitive signification was expressed

expressed by the practice of the first Christians, and their Bishops. When strangers came recommended by other Christian Churches to the Elders, and members of any distant Church, they were received by the Overseers, and Members thereof, with as much love and affection as if they were residents among them: they were kept free of all expences while they stayed, and set forward in their travels by the Pastors and Members of the Churches wherever they came. This duty is more especially recommended to Bishops, because they ought to be examples to others to stir them up to humanity and brotherly kindness. In such a wealthy Church as that in which your Lordships have the honour to be Bishops, there is much in your power, and much to be expected at your hands. If you are Christians, hospitality will be your study: you will be given to it, and practise it constantly. It is a noble feeling which arises

arises from the reflection of doing good to others, especially the distressed. The chief objects of Christian Hospitality are the poor ; to those your Lordships ought to be kind for the sake of him who came to save them, and who, during his residence here on earth, was poor himself, and shewed a peculiar regard to the poor, *that we through his poverty might be made rich.* Your Lordships must undoubtedly know that it is not Hospitality to entertain the rich, and those elegant entertainments which are to be met with at the tables of modern Bishops deserve rather the name of Luxury than Hospitality. It is not Hospitality to entertain Dukes, Lords, and Gentlemen ; for those are abundantly able to entertain themselves. The precept extends to the poor, who in equity have a claim upon all persons of substance for supply, especially upon you who have *large benefices*, and ought, according to your profession, to live moderately. The expence of

your tables and retinue is altogether superfluous; it may waste your substance, and shorten your lives, but can do you no real service. How much more pleasure would you have in feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked?—And mind, my Lords, that he *who giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord; and that which he giveth, he will repay him again.* If the words of our Saviour can have any weight with the successors of the Apostles, I shall set before you the true method of Hospitality, as recommended by himself. *When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompence thee: for thou shalt be recompenced at the resurrection of the just* *. There, my Lords, is a very

* Luke xiv. 12, 13, 14.

simple

simple and plain method of Hospitality, which is worthy of your serious consideration ; it is reasonable and judicious, and the authority injoining it is of the highest nature. You dare not presume to say, that our Lord's authority is not sufficient to authenticate this practice of Hospitality. Why then is it not observed by such as call themselves his disciples ? The alternative is plain ; you must either give up all claim to the character of Christian Bishops, or practise this divine scheme of Hospitality. But the resurrection of the just, you will say, is long credit ; but it is sure : the word of the faithful and true Witness will never deceive. It is all you have for the foundation of your hope of salvation ; and if you rest the expectation of your future happiness upon the word of our Lord, why may you not trust him with the recompence of your Hospitality ? If he shall pay you in Spiritual happiness, for

for the good you do to his poor children, you will be well recompensed.

It is amazing my Lords, that our Saviour has not required the smallest degree of your temporalities, without promising you better things at the resurrection of the just. The very changing of those *vile* bodies of yours, which you are so anxious to pamper in this life, will be of far more value than all your benefices, though you should part with them all;—and to have them fashioned like to Christ's glorious body, is an amazing privilege. Ah, my Lords, we seldom hear of any of your rank engaged in this noble Christian practice. There are many accounts of grand entertainments at your several palaces, when many Noblemen and dignified Clergymen are present, who devour as much in one day as would supply the wants of many poor hungry Christians for a month. This, by some of your friends, is

is accounted Hospitality ; but it deserves another name.—You should call it *rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness*.—But lest I should offend you or your friends with Scripture phraseology, I shall call it *great Luxury*.—Luxury, *the Bane* of the age, and of which you, my Lords, are the *most notable examples*. The poor, the halt, and the maimed, are cloistered up in poor houses and hospitals, as if they belonged to another class of beings, and treated with all the austerity and disrespect that ignorant Overseers and haughty Churchwardens please to exercise over them :—And, *Sirs*, they seldom or never have the pleasure of your visitation. There is a maxim concerning true and undefiled religion, given by an Apostle, which all Bishops ought to remember. *Pure and undefiled religion is to visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction* ; and it is added,—*and to keep yourselves unspotted from the world.*

world. Your Lordships seldom observe this maxim.—It is a pity, my Lords, for it is a noble one, and worthy of every Christian's attention. It is a glorious Hospitality to relieve distress, and make glad the hearts of the poor ; it is God-like, and worthy of Christian Bishops.—*Be ye merciful, as your Father in Heaven is merciful.* Could you desire a more excellent pattern? You certainly say, No ; but why do ye not imitate it? Your religious character obliges you to the practice thereof, and your large benefices put it in your power to do it ; you are therefore inexcusable if you neglect it.—But what can be expected from such poor sinners as you are, who wilfully pervert the laws of Jesus Christ, and seek after the honours of this world, and the pleasures of sense? When your Lord cometh, my Lords, all these honours will avail you nothing. You must give an account of your Hospitality. You must appear not as Lords

Spiritual

Spiritual before his throne, but as those who must give an account.

Allow me to suppose for once, that the history of your Hospitality should be enquired into, what would you answer? Will it be sufficient to say, that his Grace of Canterbury always kept a good house at Lambeth and Croydon;—that his Grace of York entertained elegantly at Bishop Thorp;—that Carnham Castle was always open for Dukes and Lords;—that Bishop Aukland was a ready receptacle for Deans and Prebendaries;—and Durham Palace open to receive the Judges of assize?—You stare at the supposition!—but you will look more aghast, when you hear from the mouth of the Lord, *I was an hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was naked, and ye clothed me not; I was sick, and in prison, and ye did not visit me.* Christian Hospitality, or doing good to the poor, is, in truth, my

Lords, the only true testimony that you, or any who profess Christianity can give, that you love Jesus Christ. Your learned men may dispute concerning your different theories of religious sentiments; but if you are deficient in this particular, you are no more than a *sounding brass*, or a *tinkling symbol*; the rest of your religion is no more than a blank in the sight of the Almighty.—When you neglect Hospitality, you are neither New Testament Bishops, nor true Christians. If you think this conclusion severe or unjust, I appeal to the New Testament, for the plain meaning of your Saviour's Words, and those of his Apostles.—And if you say, Who is to be judge of the meaning of those sacred dictates? My Lords, I could even appeal to your own judgement; but to deal fairly, I will appeal to any Bishop in England, provided he has death and the other world in his eye. Let me see a Lord Spiritual upon his death-bed, and I will stand

stand by his view of the meaning of Scripture; but it is so plain, that he who runs may read it: *A Bishop must be given to Hospitality.*

2. *A Bishop must be apt to teach.* According to the Apostolick sentiments, the office of a Bishop and a Teacher is all one. The Greek word signifies one qualified to instruct, or to receive instruction;—to instruct the ignorant, or to receive advice or instruction from the members of the Church. No man is qualified to be a Bishop, who is not ready to receive advice; for if he is not apt to receive instruction, he is not fit to teach others. My Lords, it is ordinarily a maxim with Diocesans, such as you, to conclude, as soon as you are installed in your office, that the members of the Church are implicitly to submit to your determinations; but this is to suppose that all the rest of the members of the Church are incapable to judge for them-

selves, and that you are Lords over their Consciences. Such an idea declares plainly, that you are not fit to teach; for New Testament Teachers are not like Schoolmasters, who teach children in things which they do not know at all, but are remembrancers, who put them in mind of what they have already an opportunity to know. No man is truly qualified for the office of a Bishop, who wants to impose his own dictates upon others, without first offering evidence and proof for his Doctrine;—and even when he has done this, he has no right to say that others are obliged to receive it. He is apt to teach, who is endued with the gift of comparing Spiritual things with Spiritual, in such a manner as to represent to the minds of others, the plain and true Spirit of Divine Revelation.

The Apostles, who must be allowed to be possessed of this qualification, did not

not pretend to teach dogmatically by imposing their own opinions upon the Churches; on all occasions they appealed to the writings of *Moses* and the *Prophets*, and the private judgement of every individual. The Christians at *Berea* are accounted more noble than others, because they did not receive the Apostolick Doctrines implicitly, but examined the Scriptures, to see if those Doctrines which the Apostles taught were consistent with what had been before written in the Scriptures. Aptness to teach, which the Apostles were chiefly endued with, consisted in a readiness to shew, in a plain manner, the consistency of the Gospel dispensation with the promises and prophecies which went before concerning the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The Apostles of Christ taught no new doctrine; all those truths and practices which they declared to the Churches, were long before spoken of by some of those extraordinary men whom God

had raised up to inform mankind, what in some future period should be made more plain. The Gospel is only a new dispensation of ancient truths, which were but more darkly revealed to the Church.—And all the Bishops in England may be challenged to shew any truth or doctrine taught by Jesus Christ, or his Apostles, of which there are not some hints given in the ancient Scriptures.—Our Lord and his disciples did indeed make the spirit of the Old Testament writers more plain, and shewed what none before was ever able to do, namely, that what happened to him, and what was now accomplished, was the spirit and intention of the Old Testament.—The qualification of a Bishop, mentioned in the text, consisted of an ability in the Teacher, to shew the agreement of the writings of the Apostles with the words of Jesus and the Prophetick Declarations.—And no man is fit to be an Overseer in a New Testament Church,
who

who is not qualified to shew the spirit and design of the Prophets and Apostles of Jesus Christ.—My Lords, it is too often the case for men who assume the office and character of Bishops, to consider the benefice more than the qualifications that belong to the office; and this is the reason why the Churches are filled with ignorant and unlearned men; for, with all deference to your Ordinations, there are many who mean to be Bishops, abundantly ignorant. Does not every Clergyman who receives Priest's orders expect, some time or other, to wear the Mitre?—There is nothing to hinder any Priest from being advanced to Lawn Sleeves, except the want of friends at Court.

To be apt to teach requires great skill in the Scriptures; and every Bishop must understand the word of God, otherwise he must be considered as a person who loves the benefice, but not the duty which belongs to the office.

3. *A Bishop must not be greedy of filthy lucre:* This is a negative qualification of a New Testament Overseer in the Church. The Greek word *αἰσχυλογίη*, signifies *shameful gain*, or emoluments obtained dishonourably; such as a *Bishop* enjoying *a benefice by the interest of friends, without teaching those who are under his charge.* A *Bishop* may truly be said to be greedy of filthy Lucre, when his main design is to obtain a living, without the least intention of doing his duty. But such men, my Lords, ought not to be *Bishops*, according to the Apostolick maxim. I know that such reflections as these will fit but light upon the minds of those who are in the possession of so many thousands a year:—But you cannot always keep a hold of those wages of unrighteousness.—Your systems of sensations must soon be dissolved, and truth and duty will appear to you in a different point of light.—It is undoubtedly mean to strive to seek after those things with anxiety, which in a few years

years you must be ashamed of. It argues a real forgetfulness of the life to come, for men to be striving about temporal emoluments under the cover of religious offices, which they never intend to fulfil ; for a Bishop who enjoys some thousands a year, to covet a Prebend in a Collegiate Church, where he seldom does duty, argues a prodigious greed of filthy Lucre. Such gain is really shameful, and unworthy of any religious character. My Lords, it cannot be proved that the Church is one degree the better of such greedy Teachers as ye are. The money which ye devour might do a great deal of service, provided it were applied to relieve the poor and the distressed : for men who have large patrimonies of their own, to thirst after gain so greedily, under a pretence of serving the Church, favours rank of unbelief and covetousness. It is impossible for any Persons who believe the Bible to go on as you do ; it can be nothing but a spirit of infidelity which makes you

thus pervert the Scriptures, and flee in the face of Revelation.—*A Bishop must not be greedy of filthy Lucre*, is a positive maxim; and while it stands recorded in the New Testament, ought carefully to be attended to.

4. *A Bishop must not be covetous*.—The Scripture calls Covetousness idolatry; and it would be very unbecoming in a New Testament Bishop to bow down to an idol. It is of small consequence whether a Bishop be a worshipper of mental or molten images; an idol in the affections, of whatever quality, is an abomination in the sight of God. Covetousness in the sight of God is the same as idol-worship. Covetousness, according to the text, signifies a love of money. A Bishop should not love money, nor set his affections upon the fordid things of this world. If he has a heart disposed towards riches; if money, or the pleasures of ease, employ his affections, he is unworthy of the office of a Bishop;

Bishop : for how can he teach others to deny the world, if he himself is a lover of the things thereof. The Heathens considered the love of money, and an anxious pursuit after worldly things, as both wicked and mean.—You know, my Lords, that Ovid calls it

— *Amor sceleratus habendi;*

which is a sentiment big with meaning.

It is a palpable sign of covetousness, for any person who enjoys a fortune of his own, sufficient to make any Christian man live comfortably, to thirst after a Church living, and undertake an office which he is not either qualified to fulfil, or never intends to discharge.—It is a proverb among the common people, that the clergy are always greedy ; and, my Lords, I remember a Prophet of the Lord added the epithet of *Dogs* to a set of Clergy not unlike yourselves. To make

make you understand covetousness a little better, I shall give the Prophet's opinion at large. *His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.* Yea, *they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are Shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.* Come ye, say they, *I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant* *.

Those Clergymen thus characterised by the Prophet were not mean men, nor insignificant country Curates, as you may imagine. They were High Priests, like you, and the very heads of the national establishment; and the Lord, by the Prophet, calls them *dumb Dogs*, because they did not speak his word to

* *Isaiah lvi. 10.*

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the people, but lived at ease, and neglected their duty, which they were bound to perform for receiving such large perquisites. When they were living in the absolute neglect of every duty belonging to their office, they could never have enough ; and every one of them was zealous in looking after his gain from his quarter. I will be sorry to say, my Lords, that these Jewish Priests were types of you ; but there is certainly some resemblance, in the matter of Covetousness, between you and them. They were fonder of increasing the revenues of the Church than fulfilling the offices that they were engaged to perform ; they tythed every thing, but did nothing, except what they ought not to have done. Instead of watching, they slept ; and when they should have fasted and prayed, they rioted in luxury, and drank wine and strong drink. Covetousness is a naughty quality in any person, but it is altogether unseemly for a Bishop.

a Bishop.—But left, by describing the vice of Covetousness, I should make some severe strictures upon your Lordships, I shall conclude this Discourse.



S E R M O N

S E R M O N VII.

NUMBERS, Ch. xviii. 24.

But the Tythes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave-offering unto the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.

AS the Levites were not allowed to buy lands and hereditary possessions, they were thereby prevented from being covetous; and as the Tythes were competent for their maintenance, they sought no more, nor aimed any higher.

higher. Were all the Priests in England forbidden, by an express law, to purchase lands or estates upon pain of losing their livings, it would prevent, in a great measure, that ruling spirit of Covetousness which prevails amongst them. The Priests and Levites depended entirely upon Providence, and their livings increased or decreased according as the Divine Bounty favoured the nation. It was contrary to the law of God, and the constitution of that nation, for any of the Jewish Clergy to interfere in secular affairs. It would make a strange catastrophe if such a law were made in England. My Lords, you would be obliged either to part with your Patri monies as Landholders, or give up your claim to the Patrimony of the Church, which would be a severe trial to many dignified Clergymen.

But what I intended to consider on this subject is the Doctrine of Tythes,
as

as practised in the Church of England. In a former Discourse it was observed, that Tythes are not held by a Divine right, and it was hinted, that they are not consistent with the spirit and genius of our free constitution. That they are now confirmed by Acts of Parliament of Henry VIII. and Edward VI.; by William and Mary, and George I. is not denied; but it will be allowed that all the laws which have been made during the reigns of those Princes are not exactly consistent with the original and fundamental laws of the kingdom. Some complaisant Parliaments have passed Bills, which have been formed into Laws, that have done little honour to the Legislature. Henry VIII. could demand of his Parliament what he had a mind; and it was well known that what he ordered with respect to Tythes, was what the Pope had done before him; and his new laws of Decimation differed nothing from those of Rome, except that he claimed

to himself what formerly was given to the Pope. The favourable Acts, which after Princes have passed in behalf of the Clergy, concerning the Tythes, were passed into laws, to oblige them to make them hold their peace, and to prevent them from interfering with matters of State, which they were always ready to do when they were not taken notice of: but such laws, instead of being constitutional deeds, were only prudential temporary Acts, which the wisdom of Government may alter without affecting the Constitution. They have no more relation to the Constitutional Laws of England, than some people may think the late Dog Act has. It is not supposed by any, that all the different Acts of Parliament which the Two Houses contrive when they meet, and persuade the Sovereign to sign, are always consistent with the Fundamental Laws of these realms. Many of them are temporary expedients designed to answer

answer the present purposes of Government, and are often repealed, when they are not found to do good by their continuance. And why may not the laws concerning Tythes be altered, when they are found to injure the various improvements in Agriculture which are carrying on in the nation. As an evidence that the Legislature did not consider Tythes as the sole property of the Church, there are near 3000 parishes whose Tythes are inappropriate, and in the possession of Laymen, who perform no Church duties, nor pay any salary except what they please. Henry VIII. was allowed by his tractable Parliament to give the Tythes to whom he pleased ; so he gave them to his favourites, whether Clergy or Laymen, according to his own will and pleasure ; and they are standing nearly in the same situation he left them. The fundamental laws of the English constitution would not be affected, supposing that all the Tythes in the nation were

given up for some other consideration ; and that, instead of receiving them in kind, a certain *modus* might be received in lieu of them, which would answer all the purposes for which Tythes in England were intended. It is an indisputable point, that Tythes were once upon another footing than they are now ; for they once belonged to the Church, and were applied to Religious purposes : but when Henry VIII. differed with the Pope, His Majesty thought proper to take more than the third part of all the Tythes of the nation into his own possession, and retailed them out in gifts to his friends and favourites. Thus the foundation of Tythes, though secured by Act of Parliament, appears a little unconstitutional. Your Lordships know, that Royal grants are not legal tenures. The Royal mind may change, and then *nullum tempus occurrit Regi*, is a known maxim, and may be applied to Tythes as well as Soccages. If the King cannot alienate

alienate, as some late Court Maxims seem to intimate, what was once the property of the Crown may be recalled; and why may not these Tythes, which were given away by former Princes, be again resumed by their successors? This is, perhaps, what the Clergy would desire; for in such a case they would be more likely to return all back again to the Church, when they come into the hands of him who is head thereof. But as there has been such a tergiversation in the disposing of Tythes, it would argue, that there were no Fundamental Laws with regard to their being received in kind. The rights of the Church are secured by *Magna Charta*; but the question is, whether Tythes in kind, or Tythes at all, be her right? For it appears unreasonable that the Church should have so much land of her own, and at the same time have a claim for the tenth part of the produce of what belongs to every other person.

This provision, which is made for the Church by Tythes in kind, cannot certainly be the intention of the constitution; for it cannot be supposed, that, for the sake of supporting one body of men, a bar should be put in the way of national improvements, which tend to the advantage of all ranks. No Act of Parliament was ever intended, however some of them may be expressed, to put a stop to improvements in Agriculture, in which the real strength of the nation consists:—nor can we suppose that our Laws can refer to objects, which the Legislature who formed them did not so much as conceive would ever exist. The industry of farmers has produced what none of the Parliaments which enacted Laws concerning Tythes ever imagined would exist in Great Britain:—and it is certainly unreasonable, that industrious men should sink their money, and bestow their labour, on others, who are at no expence, to carry

away the tenth part of their profits. But even the Tythes are far from satisfying the avaricious desires of the Clergy; for beside Tythes in kind of every thing the Earth produces, which is profitable, they exact a tax from both the living and the dead. Church Fees must be paid both by those who go to Church, and those who do not. For Marriages, Funerals, and Easter Reckonings, the Clergy receive near another Tenth of all our substance. You are, my Lords, much obliged to Popery for your large Endowments. The whole form of your Church Emoluments, as well as a great part of your worship, are the manufacture of the Man of Sin. The Jewish Clergy, from whom the Roman Church and yours would make us believe you take your pattern, had no such privileges as you enjoy: they had no other inheritance except Tythes, nor were they allowed to buy lands, or interfere in secular affairs; and every third year they were

were obliged to divide with the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow ; but after you have divided all the Tythes among yourselves, you saddle the publick with a Poor Rate into the bargain. You ought certainly to supply the poor with the tenth part of the nation's substance. Instead of this, the very poorest ranks of people are obliged to contribute to the Luxury of the Clergy. Every poor day-labourer, with a small family, must pay for his own head, and every one in his house, provided they be fifteen years of age, though they should borrow the money, or their family starve. This is hard, my Lords, very hard ; and you ought to consider it.

But suppose you have some patched-up human laws for your Tythes, and some other customary offerings, it is unfair to receive wages when you do not work. You ought certainly to do some good for your Money. It is true, you sit in Parliament ;

ment ; but the Priests who first received Tythes did not aspire so high ; they did not meddle with Civil affairs. The masters of the Lord and those of the King were in those days kept distinct.— But as the Jewish dispensation is finished, it is amazing that you, who pretend to be Christians, should still retain the Jewish system. Why do you not pursue it throughout, and offer sacrifices, as the Priests of the Law did ? You would have a right to the fat, as they had, if you performed their service ; but you can eat the fat, and do no service at all, which is highly unreasonable.

It appears something strange, that a Protestant Church should claim the privilege of laws which were intended to establish the Church of Rome. Henry I. Edward III. and Henry VIII. ratified no laws in behalf of the Church, but with a view to support perfect Popery. It is not a little suspicious in your characters,
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my Lords, that you should insist on the execution of laws for the Payment of Tythes, which no Protestant can execute, without first turning Papist.— There is not, at this day, a Protestant Church under the protection of any Government which holds Tythes upon the tenure of Popish laws, as your Church does, nor do the Clergy intermeddle in State affairs, or have any share in the Civil Government of the nations where they reside. In Denmark and Sweden the Clergy assemble in Parliament, but do not meet as Lords Spiritual along with the Temporal Lords; their business is only to attend the affairs of the Church, or to advise in things pertaining to Religion; but they do not, in the character of Barons and Spiritual Lords, sit with the Nobles to determine in Civil Decisions of the Legislature.

But to conclude this Discourse concerning Tythes, It is undoubtedly contrary

trary to the welfare of those lands for the Clergy to be rich, or to be paid with Tythes in Kind. They never can enjoy the love of the Landed Interest, while they insist upon this mode of Decimation.—And it must have the appearance of Greediness of filthy Lucre for them to prefer Tythes to the love of the people. It will be impossible for them to edify those who consider them as selfish interested men, who would not save a single soul from perdition, unless they were sure of being extravagantly paid for it.

Prudence ought to direct you, my Lords, to be moderate in this particular, otherwise I may venture to pronounce that your existence will not be long. The Laity are become wiser than in past ages, and mankind are not so much Priest-ridden as in former times. If the Commons and Lords in England should consider their own interest, it is easy

easy to for them to vote you into non-existence.—You have only one thing at present to save you ; a number of the Nobles are your friends ; and second brothers think a Bishoprick a very good auxiliary to a small estate. But as Religion is not fashionable, as in former times, this may also be overcome.

It will be your wisdom to be discreet in the article of Tythes, and not to insist upon the rigour of the law, lest by stretching your power too far, the Legislature should find reason to take it from you. There is a period approaching, when you must rank with farmers, and other poor sinners, whom you now despise. What a mortification will it be to the Gentlemen in Lawn Sleeves to be reduced to the level of poor country farmers, and to be obliged to answer for the abuse of the tenth part of the national emoluments. Souls, an't please your Reverences, may be edified for

for less money than the tenth part of the produce of the lands of England. It would certainly be better to appoint certain competent sums for the maintenance of the Clergy, and dispose of all the Chapter Lands, and Tythes, to help to pay the national debt.

According to the words of the text, if you insist upon having Tythes, you ought in conscience to give up all other inheritance in the nation, and make Tythes serve you. The Levites had no inheritance among their brethren, but received Tythes for all; they were the inheritance of the Lord, and held their livings by a Charter from him, which undoubtedly was a better foundation than the Charter of Ethelwolphus.

No Priests in those days possessed estates of thousands and hundreds a year; they were all obliged to depend upon the Almighty, who only could make

make Tythes turn to their advantage. But as *Ethelwolphus* has said nothing concerning *Clergymen* having estates, nor has *Ingulphus* recorded any thing concerning this subject, it is supposed that his Charter does not exclude Bishops from having as large temporal estates as they can procure. But this Charter, as it proceeded from a source no way respectable, had never the sanction of the Parliament of England till the reign of Henry VIII. and from a very different intention from what the first Charter supposes.

But what makes Tythes more intolerable is, that they do not serve the Church ; for instead of Tythes, in many places, the Clergy have the whole Estates, Tythes and all, to support a number of men who are of no real service to the Church, having no Cure of souls, nor any other office, except once a month, to preach a Sermon to a few people, who

who are very indifferent about hearing them.

To conclude, my Lords, I can assure you, that I do not envy you your Temporal Emoluments ; for I think that you buy them dear enough, at the expense of Truth and Conscience. I am sure I am not singular in my opinion ; thousands of your own disciples declare as much. — When you consider that there is no warrant in the Scripture for such a practice of Decimation, you cannot help concluding in your own mind, that you eat the bread of violence, unrighteousness, and oppression. — But I shall now part with you for this time, and conclude my Discourse.

SERMON VIII.

ECCLESIASTES, Ch. xii. 14.

For God will bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

THIS is a very serious affair. There will, on this solemn occasion, be none to laugh at another. Every person will have enough to do with his own affairs. When the Searcher of hearts shall lay open all the springs of actions that have ever been since the beginning of the world, there will be many works which have been determined good,

that will appear in very different colours. This is an assize where all men will be tried by an impartial Judge, who will determine of actions according to their principles, and not according to the varnish of appearances, by which they have been coloured by the art and craft of designing and interested men.

The truth of characters will, at this solemn period, be fully and fairly exposed, and none will be able to conceal the motives of actions from this Almighty Judge. Every work shall be brought into judgement,—the most hidden and most secret works of darkness. Good and bad deeds shall be made manifest; this shall be the conclusion of the whole matter. Whilst the great Drama of this Universe is acting, many things are concealed behind the scenes, which, when all the several Acts are finished, shall be laid open to the view of all, and such as have acted their part well, shall

be approved, while others, who have behaved unworthily, shall meet with a Judgement according to their deserving.

It will be a sad surprize to those who have dexterously covered over scenes of wickedness, and under colour of the fairest pretensions, concealed the worst of deeds; to see all their works exposed to those from whom they were at the greatest pains to hide them. Were thoughts as easily understood as the meaning of words, there are few persons who would not blush to look one another in the face; and, could our hearts be rendered as visible to each other as our faces, it would spoil a great degree of that confidence with which we appear in company. If the covetous man were persuaded that his love of the mammon of unrighteousness was as visible to all others, as it is manifest to himself, instead of appearing in publick, he would shut himself up in his closet, and feast

his meditations upon his gilded idols, and never show his face where any of his fellow-creatures could perceive him. Did the lewd and debauched sons of uncleanness believe that their friends and neighbours, by looking at their faces, could discern the secret springs of impurity which lurk in their hearts, they would shun the light like Owls, and skulk till the evening like Bats. Were those who dissemble with God and men fully convinced, that all the secret traces of dissimulation, with all the means which they use to conceal it, were as manifest as their visible parts, they would dread to be seen by their fellows, and tremble at the thoughts of company. But though for a season men may conceal their crimes, and cover their malicious purposes with the varnish of a profession, the period will at last approach, when all things shall be made manifest, and God shall pass a righteous judgement upon every man's works. - The wise man

man recommends the fear and service of God to the study of all men, with a view to the conclusion of the whole matter. According to Solomon's sentiments, every man should perform his worship and his duty with an eye upon a day of account and reckoning.

It may be necessary, in further inquiring into this subject, to consider the nature of this Judgement, which all men's works must undergo, and then to make some Improvement of the Subject.

1. It will be Judgement according to perfect knowledge. The Judge being infinitely wise, is able to judge of actions according to their real character. As he knows men, and what is in them, so no springs of action can lie concealed from his Omniscience. The Supreme knows men's hearts as intimately as he does their faces; and motives are as visible to him as ocular demonstration.

All things are naked and open to the eye of him with whom we have to do. Many things in human actions lie beyond the reach of the most intelligent Judge, and no human Judicature can with certainty determine upon the thoughts of men's hearts, except so far as their actions declare them: but God, whose understanding is infinite, can, with infallible certainty, determine the truth or falsehood of the motives of all his reasonable creatures. As he is the constant witness of all men's deeds, and by his infinite Intelligence perceives the secrets of their hearts on all occasions, so he is perfectly qualified to determine whether their works are good or evil. Many acts of human Judicature are determined by the rules of probability, when it is uncertain whether the determination is altogether according to truth. Men are frequently obliged to compare circumstances, and balance evidence; and from hence pass sentence, when yet
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there is no infallible certainty that they are in the right.—But JEHOVAH has a direct evidence for all his determinations; he judges from what he intimately knows, and determines from his own certain understanding. The works of men do not come before the Deity varnished with colouring of Art, or the disguises of Hypocrisy; Sophistry cannot deceive him; nor can all the reasoning of human wisdom mislead him in Judgment. Persons and actions appear before him exactly as they are, stripped of every adventitious colouring. It is impossible to over-reach the Almighty, whose intelligence is universal and infinite;—whose wisdom understands all things without reasoning upon them, and whose understanding can investigate the properties of every individual subject at once, without any middle term to compare it by. So perfect is the Divine Knowledge, that from the beginning all the works of JEHOVAH are known to him.

him. When he judges, his judgement is according to the most perfect knowledge of the nature and character of Actions, with all the secret springs thereof.

The Scripture, in illustrating the omniscience and knowledge of the Almighty, declares it in the most beautiful, and in the strongest manner. *Can any bide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord*.* *Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee †.* From all which it may be justly inferred, that this judgement will be according to knowledge and perfect understanding.

2. It will be universal. Every work will be brought into Judgement; those

* Jer. xxiii. 24.

† Psal. cxxxix. 12.

deeds

deeds which men have entirely forgotten, and never imagined would be any more considered, shall be brought into Judgement. Publick works and secret works shall be all strictly scrutinized. The works of your ministry, my Lords, will be tried at this general examination. They will be judged according to their truth or falsehood, deficiency or redundancy. Your Sermons and Religious Discourses shall undergo an exact and perfect Inquiry. Whether they have been dictated according to the word of God, or have only been the effusions of Episcopal imagination, will be fully considered ; whether they have been the dreams of your own fancies, or the Doctrines which the Lord hath commanded you to teach. This Righteous Judge will strictly enquire, whether you have smoothed your tongues, and prophesied false dreams ; imposed the Decisions of the Clergy upon the people, instead

instead of the written Word of the God of Truth.

Your work of Confirmation will be brought into Judgement ; it will then be known whether this was a work of God, or a work of your own. It appears to many now a suspicious-like work, as having no foundation in the Divine Word, though you declare that you received it from the Apostles : but then it shall be clearly determined of what quality it is. You indeed say, that you lay your hands upon the heads of children, after the example of the Apostles ; but wherein do ye fulfil their example ? They actually conferred the Holy Ghost upon those who had believed, and made them partakers of an heavenly gift, which you cannot confer ; at least, it never appears after you have imposed your hands more than it did before, which creates a suspicion in the minds of intelligent people, that this work of yours

yours is only a superstitious invention of your own.—For what is it that you confer, which any other Clergymen cannot as well bestow? I am afraid, my Lords, that upon trial, you will not be able to answer this plain question. This work of yours has all the appearance of solemn superstition. Were you as zealous in imitating the Apostles in all things, as in this one thing, there is much work which you neglect that you would find yourselves obliged to perform. The Apostles went every where preaching the word, and did not, like you, confine their exercizes to some particular occasions: they preached to the poor, and instructed the ignorant, and condescended to men of low degree; which is more than you even pretend to imitate them in. But your work must be tried, and then it will appear whether you have done right or wrong.

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Your work in Consecrating Churches will be tried. You do not pretend to imitate the Apostles in this exercise : this is purely a work of your own, and a most trifling work it appears to be. What effect can all the mummery which you pronounce have upon the walls of a house, or upon the Dormitories of the dead? This looks so like Popery, that none, except the friends of the Church of Rome, can pretend to vindicate it. It is an Action without any moral reason, and can never in Judgement abide the Trial of an impartial Judge. Did it answer any good purpose for society, or had it any foundation in the Divine Word, there might be some hope that, in the General Assize, it would at least pass without reprehension ; but as it is a pure act of will-worship, it is impossible but it must be disapproved. The solemnity with which you perform this solemn farce, would make ignorant people believe that Consecration of

Churches

Churches was a very important thing. To see a Lord Spiritual, with his Clergy, proceeding in a grave procession, to consecrate a Tabernacle of clay, would tempt one to believe that some very important thing was about to be performed, and that some Divine or Moral Reasons must require such an awful Solemnity;—but when there are no standing signatures of this Consecration remaining after the action; no peculiar glory or impressions of holiness to be observed when his Lordship retires; it must abate much the persuasion of the necessity thereof, in the minds of all judicious persons. Were such a Ceremony required by any act of Civil Government, it might be pretended that it was done in obedience to the Civil powers; but there is no act of the Legislature for consecrating Churches.—And suppose there was some law concerning this act of will-worship, it would be a sin to obey it; because no human law can
oblige

oblige us to perform a religious action where there is no Divine warrant. In matters of Religion which respect the Consciences of men, no human law can interpose. In all Civil matters, good subjects will obey the laws, and yield obedience to the powers that be; but in matters of Religion, as they are responsible to none but God Almighty, so no human law can oblige them to perform what Revelation has not declared to be their duty. Such strange works of will-worship, before the Judgement-seat of him who is the Author of all true Religious Institutions, must certainly meet with the highest disapprobation.

But, my Lords, your Spiritual Courts, and the works that are done there, will be brought into Judgement. The most secret works of your Proctors and Chancellors will be laid open. Many strange works are carried on in these arbitrary Tribunals,

Tribunals, which have ruined multitudes.

If the one half be true that is told of those Clergy Courts, against the day of Judgement there will be a sad account to give in. The unjust Fines, the ungodly Sentences, and unwarrantable Indulgencies, which are passed in your Inquisitorial Judicatories, will all be exposed to open view, and righteous Judgement given upon them. Things which few common people know any reason for, will be all fairly settled by the great Judge, when every work shall be revealed.

Your Parliamentary works will also be brought into Judgement. There is none now dare to call you to an account for what you do as Lords Spiritual in Parliament; you may vote as you please, and determine as you will, and none can hinder you; but for all these things you

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shall be brought into judgement, and be made to give an account.

Your works of Charity will also be brought to light. Religious men, who possess such large Benefices, have it in their power to do much good to the needy and distressed ; and your office and profession obliges you to do good and communicate. Out of ten or twelve thousand Pounds, one thousand every year may be easily spared for the assistance of the poor and afflicted. We hear but little of your works of Charity at present, and cannot tell how you dispose of so much money, which is said to be applied to pious purposes ; but every farthing thereof must, at last, be accounted for. I mention those things, to put your Lordships in mind of what is to happen ; for you have so much worldly employment now, that you are in danger of forgetting the day of reckoning. According to our Saviour's account, works

of Charity will be taken particular notice of, when all things shall be brought to Judgement. *I was an hungred, and you gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink ;* will, at that day, be words worth the hearing.

3. It will be impartial Judgement. The Judge of all the earth will do right. At present we often see Judgement perverted, and the poor man's cause neglected. The interest of friends goes a great way in the Judgements of this world ; and if a man has many friends, and much interest, he may sometimes have a verdict in his favour, though his cause be none of the best. But when God shall bring every work into Judgement, he will judge according to truth, and with infinite impartiality. Riches nor rank will then be regarded ; Bishops and Curates will be judged according to their works, and not according to the rank they have held in the

N 2 Church,

Church.—And here, my Lords, I am afraid that your Reverences will make a poor figure. The Curates, as they have done the principal part of the Work, will be most likely to have the chief Rewards ; and it will be certainly but Justice that they should. The impartial Judge of all men must certainly pay some regard to equity ; and it would not be equitable to give such rewards to those who have had their good things in this life, as to those who have laboured hard, and have possessed almost nothing. You, perhaps, may think it hard Judgment to perceive your Curates and Underlings preferred to their Dignitaries ; but you dare not say that there is any injustice or partiality in it. It is a grave thought, provided you had time to think ; but matters of this sort you too often put far away from your considerations. Bishopricks, and large Temporalities, may, in this life, through the interest of friends, and the partiality of the

the disposers thereof, be obtained for persons who are no ways deserving of them; but when all matters are concluded, it will be otherwise. The Divine Judgement will be impartial;—no tricks of policy, nor force of bribes, will have any influence upon the Almighty. Money, in your Spiritual Courts, will often-times carry a bad Cause; and the influence of friends prevent deserved punishments; when those who are poor, and want interest, suffer for their iniquities to the full extent. Things will be managed otherwise at the General Assize, when the merits of every cause will be strictly regarded, and those, who have been deserted in this world, find a friend that will stick faster than a brother.

4. It will be according to law. The Almighty will not judge men's actions capriciously. My Lords, you will have a fair trial. Men's works shall be tried of what sort they are; which supposes

that there is some law and rule by which they are judged. The law will be fairly laid open to every one. The books shall be opened, and those that are tried shall be judged out of the things which are written in the Books. No persons will have occasion to say, that they are judged by Laws whieh they had no opportunity to know ; for the Word of God will be the rule of all Judgement. If men's works are agreeable to Divine Revelation, there is no fear that they will be condemned on account of them ; but all works of human invention, that have been substituted in the place of those commanded in the Divine Word, will certainly be disapproved. If the Almighty had intended that his rational creatures should walk according to their pleasure in any thing pertaining to the Kingdom of Christ, he would never have made it a crime to depart from those positive rules which he hath given in Scripture ; but as he hath declared the written Word sufficient

cient for all things relating to his Church, it is evident that all human contrivances are excluded. If all these political manœuvres of yours are according to the Law of God revealed in his Word, there is no doubt but they will be approved; but in case they are found contrary to that Divine Rule, they will be condemned as unlawful, and you yourselves be in jeopardy. Whatsoever any persons receive into their religious system, which is not to be found in the book of Divine Laws, must be considered as evil works, because it is received in despite of that compleat rule of righteousness.

The Word of God will be a sufficient rule for judging all things ; and, with regard to what pertains to your Lordships, you will find it competent. By this Law your titles, offices, and behaviour, will be tried. If there is such a title as Lords Spiritual in the Scripture, then your claim to this dignity will pro-

bably be accepted, at least you may be acquitted for assuming it. But, provided that is not to be found in the Scripture, how will you look, my Lords? Before the approach of this solemn day, let us try if we can find such a title applied to men in religious offices. It may be of some service to you to know the truth of this point, for the benefit of your own Consciences ; for if such titles are not to be found in Scripture, you have now an opportunity to repent of assuming them, and may presently give them up, with all their appendages ; and, provided they are authorised by Divine Authority, your Consciences may rest at ease, and you may wait the day of trial with confidence and assurance. The word of God gives the title of *Lord* to the *Deity*, to *Kings*, *Husbands*, *Masters*, and *Prophets* ; but all these characters are very different from that of *Lord Spiritual*. You are Lords in your own houses, Lords to your wives and servants ;

vants; but you cannot be Lords over the Consciences of either of them, nor can you lawfully receive titles of Lordship for any religious character which you assume. In all the Scripture there is no Spiritual Lord mentioned, except Jesus Christ, who is Lord of Lords and King of Kings. This title, as it is not to be found authorised in the book of Divine Laws, you ought quickly to lay aside, lest the judgement of God come upon you unawares, and you be found guilty of assuming titles altogether contrary to the Law of God.

As this dignity is not warranted in Scripture, it is reasonable to suppose that Christians should not assume it; but if it is positively forbidden, it argues great guilt to claim honours prohibited by the Word of the living God. In the kingdoms of this world the Laws set bounds and regulations to honorary titles, and no person is allowed to assume the titles which

which are due to others ; and it must undoubtedly be criminal, according to the Divine Law, for men to claim titles and honours which are only due to the Son of God. If a temporal Lord were to humble himself to be a Minister of the Gospel, his office would not take from him the honours that are due to him as a temporal Lord ; but his religious office would add nothing to his Lordship, but oblige him to resign offices which his temporal character entitled him to exercise. There is no Law under the Gospel for a Minister of the Word being a Justice of the Peace, or for any Clergyman being a Civil Magistrate. After carefully searching every page which has the smallest relation to those matters, I have not been able to discover the most distant hint concerning the title of Lord Spiritual. If there is any such thing, it is incumbent upon your Lordships to point it out, for your own credit.

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The Law of God will be the rule of judging your office, and your power, as well as your titles. There will be no occasion to depart from the Scriptures for a Law to judge of your office and power, as Diocefian Bishops. You pretend to authority from Jesus Christ to rule over whole provinces ; to convey the office of priesthood in perpetual succession ; to pass censures upon such as transgress the Canon Law, or fail in point of obedience to the rules of the Church ; for all which assumed authority, you ought to produce some warrant from the Word of God.—But though you may now despise this Divine Rule, you may be assured that, by this Law, your whole behaviour shall at last be tried. I promised to make some practical Improvement of this subject ; but as the whole of the Discourse has been practical, I shall conclude, and say, *Amen.*

S E R M O N IX.

I K I N G S xviii. 27.

And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

THE Prophet Elijah seems to have been very merry on this occasion, and makes very free with Baal and his Prophets. It appears manifest from this passage, that it is no crime for grave men to laugh upon proper occasions, and

and apply ridicule to things that are ridiculous. Though Religion is one of the gravest things in the world, yet when it is founded upon absurdity, and composed of superstitious fopperies, it is nothing more than an object of ridicule. I wonder much when Dr. Brown was correcting Lord Shaftesbury, that he did not fall foul upon the Prophet Elijah; for this farcastical Prophet has made as free with the religion of Baal, and his Prophets, as ever his Lordship did with the Parsons, and the Religion of the Church of England. Elijah not only laughed at the Priests, but even made free with their Deity, which some Persons may think looked very like profanity; and to the Priests of Baal it would, no doubt, appear very profane. It was well for the prophet that he did not live in the days of the Star-chamber, nor resided within the reach of the inquisition, or they would soon have spoiled his mirth. It is a sad thing to laugh at
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the Clergy, whatever Religion they are of ; for it is always a sign of great infidelity, and shews that the Church is in danger. This Prophet of the Lord, in some countries, would have past for an infidel, and been stigmatized for a Deist. He ought to have taken his own way, but not to have ridiculed other people's God and Religion. It is a weak Religion that cannot endure the test of Ridicule.

These fycophant Prophets of Baal had got into favour with Ahab and his Queen, and thought every thing became them. The Prophets of the Lord were slain, and banished, because they would not flatter the Courtiers, and the Ministers of Ahab. None durst appear in behalf of the true Religion, except Elijah, who was a person of an intrepid disposition, and seems also to have been a man of humour. Let none of the Patrons of Dulnes and Superstition exclaim against
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treating Religious Subjects in a pleasant and humorous manner, when we have such a good pattern for the practice. The Prophet here has set us a fine example for the practice of ridicule with regard to Religious Subjects, and Religious Persons.

Here it may be necessary to consider the nature of this Ridicule, which the Prophet Elijah practised against the Prophets of Baal ; and, secondly, to enquire, Whether or not it is the test of truth, or how far it tends to discover falsehood.

1. The nature of this Ridicule will more easily be investigated by considering the objects thereof.—And there are three things in the text which the Prophet brings to the standard of Ridicule. The object of that new national worship, Baal ;—the worship itself ;—the worshippers,

worshippers, the prophets of Baal;—and the manner of their worship.

The object of that new national worship, *Baal*. *He is a god*; or, as the Hebrew reads, *Seeing he is a god, cry aloud*. There is more meant than meets the ear in these words. The Prophet was not so rude and unmannerly as to tell these Clergymen that Baal was a Dæmon, though he plainly means as much; nor does he affirm that he was a true Deity; for then he would have told a falsehood:—but argues upon their own principles, and addresses them upon that supposition which their practice suggested. *Seeing he is a god*, and you consider him as *such*, try your influence with him, and make him prove his Divinity. This is most terribly severe, and yet incomparably delicate. The actions which Elijah attributes to this false object of worship carries the degree of ridicule to the highest point. *Perhaps he is talking*,—

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ing,—and cannot hear you through the hurry of conversation. To suppose a Deity so embarrassed with conversation, as not to hear the prayers of his Ambassadors, is to make him a perfect Dæmon. This is a *curious Climax* which the Prophet uses. He begins with one of those common actions which hinders men from attending to petitions, the *noise* and *hurry* of conversation, and hereby brings Baal down to the level of a finite creature;—yea, he makes him an *impertinent babbler*, who when he was engaged in one subject, could take notice of nothing else.—But he adds, *or, he is pursuing.*—Intent upon a victory, and must have his attention called off from so serious an action before he will hear you. Elijah makes Baal *truly Heathen*; he gives him the character of *Mars, the God of War*, whom the Heathens brought in for their assistance in time of battle. Those Prophets must have been very stupid not to perceive when their God was treated like a devil;

a devil; for this farcastical Prophet undeifies him altogether. *Or he is in a journey.*—Now he is divested of both *Conscience* and *Omnipresence*. The Prophet positively hints that he could not be everywhere; when he was pursuing, and in a journey, he could not hear the prayers of his Prophets.—This was bringing him down very low; but he adds, *or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.* Now his *godship* is in a *dose*, and taking a nap. The images are naturally introduced; for first, he is considered as talking extravagantly,—then pursuing,—afterwards in a journey,—and at last, he falls asleep.

Elijah could not have more severely satirized the Deity of these Prophets, supposing he had expressly given him all the bad epithets in the Hebrew language. The false prophets could not decently be offended at him for treating their God in this manner; for their own

behaviour suggested the ideas which he expresses. Besides, as this was a comparative trial between the God of Israek and this false Deity, the event was most likely to try the force of the ridicule; and the experiment, which was now begun, would in all probability determine what was truth or falsehood in the matter in controversy. The man who laughs at an absurd character, even suppose it should be annexed to a Deity, does not ridicule a Divine Name, but ridicules the imaginary fancies of superstitious minds. It would be no reflection upon the character of God Almighty, for a Christian to laugh at a *god* made of a wafer, though a good Catholick might account it profane. It is impossible for any person who has the least risibility to be grave in treating such unnatural and absurd opinions. If any grave man should solemnly tell me, that the God of the Universe took pleasure in a Christian's flogging himself for his sins,

fins, I could not help smiling at him ; but if he told me further, that it was essential to his ideas of his character, I should certainly laugh very heartily at both him and the Deity which he worshipped.—And I should certainly do no more than the Prophet Elijah did in the case before us.

The Prophet next ridicules the worshippers of Baal. They had called upon this idol from morning till noon, and they were still where they were. He had paid no attention to their prayers, nor shewed the smallest sign of regard to them. Elijah desires them to cry louder ; this implied that there was some defect in their performance. They worshipped their God as if he had been deaf ; and the Prophet makes merry with their absurd notion of being heard by their idol for their much speaking.

The Prophet's address to those superstitious Baalites is truly ironical and sarcastic. *Cry aloud*, says he, when they were crying as loud as they were able, and cutting themselves with knives till the blood gushed out. There cannot be any thing more satirical than to desire a person to exert himself when he is at his *ne plus ultra*, and can do no more. One would have thought that Elijah might have paid some regard to the Prophets of Baal, and considered, that though they differed from him, they might mean well in their own way. Absurdity may be tolerated, and its votaries preserved from the influence of penal laws ; but it never can have the privilege of being free from the edge of ridicule. Even grave men must laugh at what is unnatural and absurd ; and they cannot help it, provided they have any humour in them at all. Elijah, as grave as he was, was obliged to laugh at those mad Prophets.

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Their manner of worship was truly ridiculous ; their odd gesticulations, their jumping upon the altar, and cutting themselves with knives, and shouting like madmen, must have afforded a strange aspect. The men were called Prophets too,—and were a sort of apes of the servants of the Lord ; they were the Queen's Clergy, and the favourites of the Court. It was highly laughable to find that those Court Clergy should have so little influence over their Deity, and still more so for them to conceive that an idol could perform divine works.

The object of all this ridicule we find is absurdity ;—the absurdity of the object of worship ;—the worshippers ;—and their manner of worship.

Let us now see how far Ridicule is the test of truth.

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When men make merry with truth, the laugh always goes against them.—Let us suppose that the Prophets of Baal had tried their Ridicule upon Elijah and the God of Israel, it would not have been long before their mirth would have been spoiled ; the trial would have decided the controversy, and the laugh gone upon the other side.

Though Ridicule is not the method to investigate truth ; yet it distinguishes it from falsehood upon trial, and he who attempts to render truth ridiculous, will at best but expose himself. The friends of error generally betray themselves by feeling pain, when the weapon of satire is employed against them ; whereas those who are conscious of the truth of their cause, remain easy, and perfectly composed when fools laugh at them. Truth is like beauty, it retorts Ridicule upon those who attempt to throw reproach upon it.

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Upon the whole, we may see from the practice of Elijah, that it is lawful to treat Religious men and things with Ridicule when they deserve it; and that good humour and a grave character are not inconsistent with one another. Elijah was a grave man, and yet he makes use of good humour in the case before us, and applies Ridicule to a very grave subject.—Let none of their Reverences exclaim against the freedom which is used with the suspicious part of their character.—If there is nothing absurd about them, satire will not affect them.

F I N I S.











